

— *Nikolai Molchanov* —

GENERAL DE GAULLE

— ***His Life and Work*** —



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His Life and Work



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ГЕНЕРАЛ ДЕ ГОЛЛЬ

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Late in the autumn of 1900, a tall, slightly stooping gentleman with greying hair, dressed entirely in black, walked along an *allée* in the Luxembourg Gardens past the cold statues and the trees that had shed their leaves. From time to time Henri de Gaulle, professor of philosophy at the Jesuit college in the Rue de Vaugirard, looked sternly, and sometimes gently, at his son Charles walking at his side, whose tenth birthday fell on that particular day. They were going home from the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt. The boy had had to wait long for the treat promised him, but now he was holding in his hand the play-bill—*The Eaglet*, a play by Edmond Rostand. Charles had heard so much of him in the previous months! It was said of Rostand that he could become the king of France overnight, should he wish it—so great was his fame.

His star had risen three years before, with the performance of his famous heroic comedy *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Rostand had revived the ancient art of the Romantic drama in verse. His hero Cyrano made one cry and laugh all at the same time. The bold, noble, and witty Gascon with the funny enormous nose seemed to embody the best qualities of the Frenchman. The new play, *The Eaglet*, was much poorer. The ill fate of Napoleon's son, the so-called King of Rome, who became a veritable prisoner of the Austrian court after the Emperor's fall, had very little in common with the way it came out in the play. It seemed that Rostand had confirmed Napoleon's dictum: "There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous." In *The Eaglet*, tragedy got mixed up with cheap vaudeville, and the result was a banal melodrama, despite the brilliant Alexandrian verse, the splendid acting, and the magnificent stage setting. And yet, *The Eaglet* made a furore and outshone the really remarkable play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It would seem that plays, like books, have their fates depending on the moods of the reader or the spectator!

In the days when the new century began, the French were extraordinarily receptive to bombast and rhetoric about *la patrie*, *la gloire*, *la France*. Excited patriotic feelings ran skyhigh whenever the nation's humiliation or Napoleon's name were mentioned—and these were the themes of Rostand's *The Eaglet*. For thirty years

the French had smarted under the disgrace of the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871. The misfortunes of the vanquished had fallen to France: she had had to give up Alsace and part of Lorraine, and to pay the enormous indemnity of five thousand million. As Bismarck said, France had been left little but her eyes to bemoan her misfortunes...

Far from abating the feeling of humiliation, the three intervening decades had transformed it into a passion for revenge. France had grown strong again. The 1900 World Exhibition in Paris demonstrated its riches, attainments and talents. Now the aching of the old wounds became unbearable. The French had forgotten nothing, the statue of enemy-captured Strasbourg in the Place de la Concorde was always covered with crape and its pedestal buried in flowers. The spirit of revenge grew menacingly ripe, finding unexpected outlets. Sailor's caps for boys became fashionable, with *Revenger*, *Dauntless*, *Indomitable*, and the like, printed on them. The ten-year old Charles de Gaulle coming back, all wrought up, from a performance of *The Eaglet* was also wearing such a cap. His eyes roved this way and that, and Rostand's splendid verse rang in his ears. The tirades of Napoleon's old soldier Flambeau, the sufferings of the miserable "blond Bonaparte" who played with his tin soldiers on the stage (little Charles' favourite occupation), all this excited him greatly. The words of Napoleon's son resoundingly echoed in the child's mind: "Ah! My father!... glory!... The eagles!... The purple!... The imperial throne!..." His eyes filled with tears as he recalled the untimely death of the King of Rome, who left this world with yet another ringing phrase: "My horse, to go to my father!"

In a word, Rostand won undisputed sway over Charles' heart for a long time to come. It all fitted: long before that memorable visit to the theatre, his mother had waved and combed his hair *à la roi de Rome*, and there was usually a stiff collar round his neck, just like the one the great actor Coquelin wore when he played Cyrano.

True, in those days all French children, who grew up in an atmosphere of nationalistic exhilaration, were easily fascinated by the beating of drums, by gun fire, the glitter of weapons and the fluttering of regimental colours. But young Charles proved particularly susceptible to all these trappings of patriotism. His family was completely permeated by the spirit of ecstatic patriotism, of ancient traditions and passionate national pride. Here, France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war was often sadly discussed. Charles de Gaulle would remember all his life his mother's reminiscences of the despair at the sight of her parents bitterly lamenting the capitulation of Marshal's Bazaine's army in 1870. Charles' father, a veteran of the disastrous war, recalled the bitter days of the defeat

particularly often. Henri de Gaulle, Lieutenant of the Mobile Guards, fought the Prussians who besieged Paris, and was wounded in a battle near Stains. He often took his children to the former battlefield and showed them the monument to the dead, with its broken sword and the epitaph which they read with excitement: "The sword of France, broken in their valiant hands, will be forged again by their descendants."

Henri de Gaulle often took his children for walks through the historical spots of Paris and its environs, telling them of the glorious episodes from the history of France along the way. Young Charles de Gaulle became imbued with a passionate feeling of patriotic pride. Many years after, he wrote this of the strongest impressions of his childhood: "As a young native of Lille living in Paris, nothing struck me more than the symbols of our glories: night falling over Notre Dame, the majesty of evening at Versailles, the Arc of Triomphe in the sun, conquered colours shuddering in the vault of the Invalides."

Henri de Gaulle showed the children the historical monuments with the same air with which he let them touch his 1870 war medal. Those monuments were also a kind of family relics. Already in his early childhood Charles de Gaulle learnt of his forebears who for centuries had helped the kings to build France.

Not many of the descendants of old French aristocracy could boast, as he could, of the glorious king Philippe-Auguste granting Richard de Gaulle a feudatory domain in Elbeuf as early as 1210. The courageous cavalier Jehan de Gaulle, ruler of Orléans and veteran of the Hundred Years' War, was a particularly prominent figure. In 1406, he crossed the Seine with a band of crossbowmen and stormed Charenton; in 1413 the king entrusted him with the defence of the Saint-Denis gates besieged by the Duke of Burgundy, and two years later he fought in the famous battle of Azincourt, which ended in a defeat for the French. When the English captured Normandy, Jehan de Gaulle was invited to join the English king. Like his remote descendant, he refused to become a collaborationist; he lost his possessions and moved to Burgundy; the king of France rewarded his loyalty with an estate in Cuisery.

The de Gaulle genealogical tree sprouted new branches; history mentions several other members of the family bearing a name consonant with that of ancient Gaul that grew into France. By the beginning of the 18th century, Charles de Gaulle's forefathers, once "the nobility of the sword", *la noblesse d'épée*, become "the nobility of the mantle", *la noblesse de robe*. The family records list vice-regents, councillors of parliament and of courts, attorneys at law and prosecutors.

But then the Great French Revolution came, and Jean-Baptiste-Philippe de Gaulle, councillor of the Paris parliament, felt the

weight of its iron hand, like all the gentry and noblemen of France. He was ruined, and under the Convent thrown into prison. The Thermidor 9 counter-revolutionary coup saved him; on the day after the coup he was freed, and later adapted himself to the new times. By the end of Napoleon's rule he became director of the postal service of the Great Army. His son, Julien-Philippe de Gaulle, linked the rather withered branch of the nobility to the industrial bourgeoisie of the north. He married Joséphine Maillot of the family owning a tobacco factory at Dunkirk. The lady's family also had a fine historical record, though less illustrious than his own. In the 18th century, one of the Maillots built the fortifications of Lille under Vauban.

The offspring of the two declining families, one aristocratic, the other bourgeois, were of a not too common variety: they may be termed conservative intellectuals. Julien-Philippe de Gaulle left behind several historical works, such as *A New History of Paris and Its Environs* (*Nouvelle histoire de Paris et ses environs*) or *Notes on the Life and Work of M. Bidault* (*Note sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Bidault*). Charles' grandmother, Joséphine Maillot, was particularly active in the field of letters. She wrote quite a few books, including a life of Chateaubriand, whose ardent admirer her famous grandson would become. She also published the magazine *Correspondance des familles*. A devout Catholic, she held uncommonly broad views. In her magazine Joséphine published encouraging comments on some of the socialist writings of Proudhon and even the works of future Commune Jules Vallès.

There were three sons in the family. Charles became a historian and wrote the book *The Celts in the 14th Century* (*Les Celtes au XIV^e siècle*). The second son, Jules, also became a scholar, acquiring fame as an entomologist with his *Systematic Catalogue of the Hymenoptera* (*Catalogue systématique des Hyménoptères*), in which he described five thousand species of wasps and bees. The career of the third son, Henri, born in 1848, was at first uncertain. A veteran of the war with Prussia, admitted to the school for military engineering, *l'Ecole polytechnique*, he gave up an officer's career, preferring the post of a small official at the prefecture of the Seine department. He did not stay here long either, resigning in protest over injustice towards a colleague. Finally he became a teacher at a religious school. He taught literature, philosophy and mathematics at the Jesuit Collège de l'Immaculée-Conception in the Rue de Vaugirard.

In 1886, Henri de Gaulle married his cousin Jeanne Maillot: thus the de Gaulle family formed a second link with the industrial bourgeoisie of the north. On November 22, 1890, a second son was born to this family. The first child was named Xavier, the second, Charles. He was brought into this world in a two-storey residence

of a respectable bourgeois quarter of the city of Lille, far from its noisy industrial districts. But there is no need here to describe Lille in detail; the family lived in Paris, and the two elder sons were born there for the sole reason that Madame de Gaulle wished to give birth in the house of her mother.

Many held that in his character Charles de Gaulle was a younger edition of his mother: the same sensitivity hiding behind an icy mask of imperturbability, the same temperament, a mixture of steadiness and excitability, even hot temper at times. As for the world outlook, culture, and mode of thinking, he was obviously his father's own son.

The north of France, where Charles de Gaulle's family comes from, has always been regarded as the focus of nationalism combined with Catholicism. The church, however, expresses here a slightly different spirit than, for instance, in France's western regions, where a great deal has been preserved, in frozen forms, since the feudal times. In the north, the Catholics are more ready to accept the new trends. To an extent that is also true of some sections of the industrial bourgeoisie of the northern departments. Here, not far from the intersection of the principal European trade routes and industrial centres, it was impossible to survive against competition unless one had enterprise, an ability to adapt oneself to the new circumstances and the demands of the market, and, of course, thrift and great industry. The north was the main focus of the business energies of the French bourgeoisie at the time, and that was reflected in its puritanical image, mode of life and morals. The gentry in these parts, as distinct from the south and west, also accepted the more modern ways, and were particularly close to the new bourgeoisie. Besides the numbers of workers also grew in the north, in their own way compelling the bourgeoisie to comprehend the requirements of the times. As for nationalism, its strong influence stemmed from the fact that for centuries this area of France had been a battlefield and a crossroads of enemy invasions.

Generally speaking, the atmosphere of human relations, the manners and morals in the north were much harsher in the tone than those of the Mediterranean south, of Languedoc or Provence. Balzac wrote that the character of the inhabitants of these parts was "in these two words, patience and conscience, which seemed ... to make the mores of this country just as flat as its wide plains, and just as cold as its cloudy sky". But let us leave the north, for Charles de Gaulle was taken to Paris as a small child, and several generations of his paternal ancestors had been Parisians.

Jeanne de Gaulle, a very religious woman, created a highly pious atmosphere in the house. A good wife and a tender mother, she was firm and unyielding in matters of religion and morals. Her hus-

band was much the same; it was not for nothing that he taught at a religious college. Apart from the obligatory Mass, nothing was ever done without prayer. The nostalgia for the past, and especially for monarchy, the restoration of which was hopelessly out of the question, created a mood of certain alienation from the life around them. The 14th of July, the Bastille Day, was almost unrecognised as a lawful celebration. The Joan of Arc anniversary was believed to be more suitable as a national day of festivity.

The events of political life were approved of only if they in some way promised the revival of France's "true glory". Charles' parents enthusiastically acclaimed the visit to Paris of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II in 1896. The alliance with Russia promised success in the impending war with Germany. A semblance of a monarchic atmosphere was revived in Paris at various official ceremonies, like the laying of the first stone in the Alexander III bridge. The family invariably went to the military reviews at the Longchamp hippodrome, delighting in the orderly columns of soldiers which reminded one of the former martial glory. True, Henri de Gaulle, who referred to himself as "longing for monarchy", would have preferred to see the royal lilies on white standards instead of the Republican tricolour. There were but two institutions of French society which were regarded as worthy of all kind of respect and trust in the family of Henri de Gaulle—the army and the church. So much greater was the bitterness with which they watched the fierce attacks on these pillars of France's thousand-year history. The last decade of the 19th century abounded in internecine strife, the focus of which was the notorious Dreyfus affair. The fate of a Jewish officer, condemned on a trumped-up charge of spying, disgusted the conscience of France. The country found itself on the verge of a civil war as the vile chain of forgeries, lies, and foul play came to light to which the top brass of the French army resorted to save their face in the shameful affair.

Charles de Gaulle's parents were wounded in their most sacred feelings: their beloved army, the pride of the nation, had covered itself with the mud of unheard-of shame. The holy apostolic church had also dirtied its fingers in defending the clique which had cooked up the absurd Dreyfus affair to bring down the hateful Republic. The criminal machinations of the military and of clericals were fearlessly and convincingly denounced by Jean Jaurès and Emile Zola. But as a rule, men of conservative convictions became anti-Dreyfusards even in the face of obvious facts. It was at this moment that Henri de Gaulle showed his noble spirit and intellectual honesty. Not only did he believe Dreyfus to be innocent, but he also stated his views quite openly and officially. And that while working at a Jesuit college! That protest damaged his career quite badly.

True, the conservative convictions, nationalistic pride, monarchist dreams and clericalist sympathies of Charles' parents remained unshaken despite everything. They merely became even more secluded, confirmed in their conviction that all that the family could be proud of lay in France's past history.

From Charles' early childhood it was instilled in his mind that, by a happy chance, he was a branch on the once so glorious but now somewhat withered genealogical tree of the de Gaulles. Naturally, as often as not the conversation would turn to the Hundred Years' War or similar events. The children were told that persons of such origin as theirs must always be true to their historical mission—preserving the high spiritual image of the nation, being the mainstay of patriotism and of the Catholic faith. That was the way in which the future general was brought up in the family. At a very early age, he was already conscious of his membership in the true élite intended by God himself to be the salt of the earth, in the cohort of the chosen carriers of the French spirit. Of course, the services of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie were also recognised, but it was insisted at the same time that the nobility were incomparably superior to this class of people doomed to the eternal lowly chase after money.

Apparently, here lie the sources of de Gaulle's unwavering rejection, even to his last days, of his membership in the bourgeoisie. Running somewhat ahead of the story, let us quote his words from the year 1962: "A bourgeois? I have never been that. The bourgeoisie, that is riches, a desire to possess them or acquire them. My family and myself, we have always been poor... I have never felt myself to be linked with the interests and aspirations of this class."

As we shall have occasion to see, General de Gaulle had a very original conception of the class structure of society.

Let us go back, however, to the days of his childhood, when the conviction was instilled in him that he was a member of the most outstanding, the highest social group, the nobility, and moreover belonged to a select caste in it, one that did not merely fight for the king but had the knowledge and the authority to judge, control, enlighten and instruct men. He acquired rather more than the usual pride of a gentleman: a consciousness of being a patrician. That had always been the hallmark of hereditary magistrates, of the *noblesse de robe*, to which many of Charles de Gaulle's ancestors belonged.

Of course, the prefix "de" in itself did not mean much any longer, the more so that "there is no seigneur without land", as they said in France in olden times. And the family did not have land or riches, if one did not count the small estate La Ligerie in Dordogne, where the children spent summer. But an awareness of one's noble origins often has the psychological result of desiring

social prominence and power. A person becomes strongly conscious of being different from the others, instinctively assuming a certain formality of language and manners, even if he does not openly plume himself on his nobility, which de Gaulle never did, for the parents developed in him, along with the other qualities, good manners, taste and poise.

Already in his early childhood, his behaviour showed some signs of faith in his special destiny. Once, ten-year-old Charles, as all boys of his age will, slid down the banisters and, losing his balance, had a bad fall. Someone helped him up asking solicitously: "You weren't frightened, were you?" "Frightened?" he answered proudly. "Don't I have my star?"

Very early, the boy showed character that was by no means complaisant. No one would call him simple-hearted, still less obedient. When he lowered his eyes, his face assumed a kind of supercilious expression, and as he looked ahead, frowning, he appeared courageous to some and arrogant to others. At times he was lost in long gloomy silences, but much more often he was restless, bullying, hot-tempered and abrupt. Charles became quite carried away playing war games with country boys. It was he who raised hell in the boys' room, piling up books, copy-books and toys in heaps. It was said in the family that "when Charles appears, tranquillity disappears".

His mother placed great faith in schooling; in 1900 Charles began to attend the Jesuit college in the Rue de Vaugirard. Jesuits were famous for their skill in inculcating respect for the sacred principle of authority and unquestioning obedience. Their main efforts were aimed at encouraging passive obedience as the highest virtue. Guided by the teaching of St. Bernard, they demanded implicit compliance with any order from the superiors, however disgusting and terrible it might be. Debating the expediency or justice of an order was a grave sin. According to the teaching of the founder of the Order of Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, a Christian must be "like a corpse in the hands of his superiors".

Anything that smacked of contrary ideas or spirit was, naturally, decisively rejected. The teachers at the Collège de l'Immaculée-Conception harshly denounced the Reformation in all its manifestations, and especially the 18th century, the age of the French Enlightenment. Rousseau, Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists were condemned out of hand. And how could it be different when, for instance, Montesquieu's famous *The Spirit of Laws* (*L'Esprit des lois*) radically undermined the doctrine of passive submission? "Excessive obedience," wrote the great thinker, "supposes ignorance in the person that obeys: the same it supposes in him that commands."

The Jesuits damned with especial fury the Great French Rev-

olution and its leaders. Here is what the children could read in their textbooks: "Danton was very ugly. He reminded one of a raging bulldog. He was very cruel. He was dishonest"; "Marat was a terrible individual. He is said to have reminded one of a toad..."; "Robespierre suffered from insane pride. He believed himself to be always right, and wanted to execute anyone who thought differently from him". That makes it clear why it was that precisely in those years when Charles de Gaulle attended the Jesuit college, France's Republicans, Democrats and Socialists persistently fought for adopting a law barring religious congregations, particularly Jesuits, from educating children.

But all of this took place in a world rigidly separated from young Charles de Gaulle by the ideas assimilated in the family and at school. Many things outside the walls of his home and college seemed completely incomprehensible, alien, and inexplicable to him, and continued to be so for quite a long time, although his young mind developed and his spiritual horizon became extended. Stability and even immutability of conceptions once formed was one of the most important features of his personality.

The Jesuit Fathers did not succeed in taming Charles. The hope that the college would bring order and submissiveness into his character and discipline it did not come true. The boy's nature proved to be quite unmalleable. It was not as if he rejected the profoundly conservative or, to use a more precise word, reactionary ideological essence of the education at the Jesuit college. He simply did not know any other world of ideas and could not even imagine any possible alternative to the sophisticated obscurantism which the Jesuits passed off for divine revelation. Neither did he protest against the religious aspects of the education, the obligatory Masses, prayers before and after classes, apologetics, catechism, the reading of religious books and other forms of religious scholarship and ceremonials. Religion became a habit with him; his faith was far from fanatical, but he observed all the rituals much like he washed in the morning.

The whole point was that the system of petty meticulous regulation unsupported by any kind of logic, the need for resigned submission to all that is prescribed, was unbearable to him.

Charles de Gaulle could not become "a corpse in the hands of his superiors". His temperament rejected passive submission. He remained true to his character, which compelled him to display active disobedience at the most crucial moments in his life, and it was this that made him such an outstanding figure.

The coercion implicit in school discipline roused Charles' indignation. He was often reprimanded for lack of discipline and diligence in his studies. Many years later, when he was already President of the Republic, the General suddenly confessed to his grand-

sons and grand-nephews: "I never learnt my lessons in the first forms at school. But that is not an example to be imitated!"

He was by no means lazy, and showed exceptional diligence—but only when he did something that he liked, something that stirred his imagination. German lessons, for instance, disgusted him. The parents tried various means of making the obstreperous boy toe the line. Thus, his mother insisted on his taking piano lessons with Mlle Monteil. But the results were less than average. His father said: "Charles will go far, far... Oh Lord, that all may go well..."

However, the parents' fears proved groundless. Soon Charles began to compete with his elder brother Xavier, whose success was continually set up as an example for him. His natural gifts asserted themselves. Besides, the family developed his taste for culture. In the evenings, he listened with pleasure to his father reading Racine or Seneca, although he preferred Rostand in those years. He learnt the whole of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by heart.

The throne and the altar, the sword and the aspergillum were the ideals on which education at the Collège de l'Immaculée-Conception was centred. But the pupils were also taught sound knowledge of antique and classical French literature. Charles de Gaulle had excellent literary schooling along the traditional classical lines. All his life he would retain the style of speech which he acquired in childhood. His speeches would always be Ciceronian and epic in character, marked by brevity, clarity, and precision of the terms used. Combined with boldness of the vocabulary and imaginative thinking, all of this would help him to develop an effective and incisive type of eloquence.

The taste for literature roused not only a passion for reading, which never abated, but also a desire to try his hand at writing. On reading an invitation to take part in a literary competition in some magazine, he wrote a short play in verse, *A Dangerous Encounter* (*Une mauvaise rencontre*), in the style of Rostand, naturally, and rather trivial in content. He was awarded the first prize: he could either receive 25 francs or publish his work. The young *littérateur* chose publication. It is to the credit of the budding author that later he never tried to write poetry.

The inclination for literature, which he always retained, receded, however, into the background, giving way to an early interest in history. Literature developed de Gaulle's form, manner and style of expressing thoughts and views, while his world outlook was largely shaped by the study of history.

In general, the French love history and take great pride (with good reason) in their country's splendid past. Charles de Gaulle delighted in the study of history, forgetting fun and games for his books of history even on holidays. This passion first developed in the family circle. At school, history became Charles' favourite sub-

ject, and he acquired extensive historical knowledge, though somewhat one-sided. The fact is that history was taught at the Jesuit college as if it consisted entirely of a sequence of wars, battles, and the acts of military leaders and kings. "Forty kings made France": this famous principle determined the essence of the philosophy of history which was instilled in the students. This kind of history left no room for the popular masses and the struggle of classes. Everything was dominated by divine providence and the genius of the rulers.

Yet even this sort of archaic and conservative presentation of history helped Charles de Gaulle to gradually form an idea that was instrumental in working out a worldview based on the absolute priority of the national factor. In his view, the nation is an eternal element of life, remaining intact under the variable surface of reality.

In de Gaulle's conception, time flows backwards, as it were, into the past. That is a rather unusual conception of history, of course, though a reversion to the past may signify progress at times. He became confirmed in the view that the existence and consolidation of the French nation was the highest goal of history, its meaning and content. Everything had to contribute to the glory of France. Young de Gaulle came to a firm conviction that his own life would have to be subordinated to that goal. Many years later his younger brother Pierre would say: "He knew already at college that he would have to save France..."

Thus did a young man of the 20th century assimilate culture built on the concepts and notions of the 18th. France, on which all his thoughts were focused, was in his mind a frozen social form, whereas in real fact it was in those years a boiling cauldron of fierce political passions. The first decade of the 20th century saw another increase in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Strike followed strike. The cobble-stones of France's industrial cities were more and more often stained with the blood of the proletarians. Elections invariably brought an increase in the number of Socialist deputies at parliament. Left bourgeois parties, Radicals above all, gained most of the seats there. The Rightists, the clericals and the monarchists, lost their influence. These three principal political trends confronted each other in the grim power struggle. Governments rapidly succeeded one another. The Parliament became the scene of endless political battles. Not one of the political parties was united, Leftist, Rightist, moderate and extreme trends competing within them. That was one of the most dramatic pages in the political history of France torn by irreconcilable class contradictions.

In the reminiscences of his youth, Charles de Gaulle wrote: "I was ... attracted, but also severely critical, towards the play which

was performed, day in, day out, in the forum; carried away as I was by the intelligence, fire, and eloquence lavished upon it by countless actors, yet saddened at seeing so many gifts wasted in political confusion and national disunity. All the more so since at the beginning of the century the premonitory symptoms of war became visible."

France's turbulent political life seemed senseless to young de Gaulle, for the meaning of politics lay, in his opinion, in the idea of the nation's unity which was in fact completely at variance with the actual structure of society. However beneficial that idea might be at extraordinary moments of external danger, it could not of course abolish the harsh inevitability of profound splits within the French nation into antagonistic classes and groups. With indignation, and completely sincere indignation at that, de Gaulle always thought that everything would be clear and simple if only the "demons" of inner strife and the "evil spirit" of dissent did not weaken France. To the end of his days he would resent this state of affairs, so unnatural in his view. Any manifestations of dissent, whether initiated by the Right or by the Left, caused his indignation. He believed himself to be politically neutral, above any discord. That was merely an illusion. The Rightists invariably fought under the nationalist colours, so dear to de Gaulle's heart, and he was attracted to them. The Socialists, however, proclaimed the idea of internationalism, which de Gaulle viewed as bordering on high treason already in his youth. This extreme loyalty to the patriotic ideal of the nation, assimilated by de Gaulle in childhood, invariably led him into the conservative Rightist camp, but not far enough for him to lose touch with reality. He had no sympathy for extreme clericals and monarchists, who still blindly hoped for a restoration of the monarchy and the omnipotence of the church. On one occasion de Gaulle's mother, listening to the praises to her sons, remarked sadly: "Yes, but they make me suffer... They are Republicans..." Young de Gaulle realised at an early age that his parents' monarchist hopes were illusory; he believed in the stability of the Republican system. True, he wanted the Republic to be different—united and resting on the traditional foundations of the church and the army; in a word, a Republic in which "order" would prevail. He was therefore by no means delighted by the successes of Democrats and Republicans in their fight with the clerical reaction, particularly since such events directly affected his own destiny.

SAINT-CYR

There came a day in July 1904 when Henri de Gaulle's family were plunged in gloom. An event had happened that had been awaited with foreboding for several years: parliament had passed a law forbidding religious congregations to teach at schools. Before that, there was some hope that the church's resistance to the anti-clerical legislation would gain the day. The holy fathers stirred up fierce fanaticism, organising a noisy movement in defence of "free" school. The most backward departments, like Finistère, became the scene of armed clashes between duped Catholics and police driving monks from schools. But the majority of the population did not support the "black party". So now the closing of the Jesuit Collège de l'Immaculée-Conception, just as of other institutions of this kind, was merely a question of time. Where would Charles and his three brothers continue their studies? Moreover, the well-being of the whole family was threatened: its head was at the time director of studies at the college in the Rue de Vaugirard.

Charles had by that time successfully finished his studies in rhetoric. But he was too young, and it was too early for him to sit for the bachelor's examinations. Not to waste time, he was also enrolled in the philosophy class. But he was not to finish his studies in Paris. The Republic was implacable: the Jesuits' educational activities were henceforth prohibited. Of course, Charles de Gaulle could have continued studies in some secular college. But his parents detested those Republican institutions. The father sent him in 1907 to study abroad, in Belgium. That was where the Paris Jesuits moved, founding there the Collège du Sacré-Coeur. It was situated at Antoine near Tournai, very close to the French border. Charles de Gaulle continued his studies not far from the famous battlefield at Fontenoy now planted with beetroot. The legendary hills of Waterloo were also hard by. It was, again, a privileged educational establishment; many of the students' names had the aristocratic prefix *de*, and they always said *vous* to one another. Appropriately, the college occupied the former castle of the Prince de Ligne, its brick front rising above the river Escaut.

Charles de Gaulle attended a special class in mathematics, showing great aptitude for the science. His teachers advised him

to enter l'Ecole polytechnique after graduating from college. But the youth who had once dreamed of becoming a missionary had made his final choice. He wanted to become an officer and intended to join the military college of Saint-Cyr. His preference for a military career was by no means accidental. It was due first of all to a prejudice against all the Republican institutions, excepting the traditional "pillars of society", the church and the army, a prejudice quite natural to a young man of aristocratic origin brought up in a Jesuit college and a conservative family. But this simple explanation does not exhaust all the motives for young de Gaulle's choice of the army as a career. It was a result of intense thinking about the destiny of his country and his own mission, a natural fruit of his spiritual development completed in the complex, tense and contradictory intellectual atmosphere in France at the beginning of this century.

Later de Gaulle would describe that atmosphere as it appeared to him in his youth: "In the domain of thought, the arrival of Boutroux and Bergson, who revived French spirituality, the mysterious radiance of a Péguy, the precocious maturity of youth that felt the coming of a bloody harvest; in literature, the influence of a Barres who developed in the élite the consciousness of the eternity of the nation by showing the ties which linked it with the ancestors..."

Properly speaking, this short list of names, trends and phenomena holds the key to an understanding of young de Gaulle's spiritual world, of the influences that affected him between the ages of 15 and 20, and of the mode of thinking and world perception that he would largely retain throughout his life. There was in his spiritual milieu a feeling of fear and confusion in the face of the breakdown of many established conceptions: an intellectual crisis enveloped the bourgeois intelligentsia, reflecting the crisis of society as a whole. The views of mechanistic materialism, firmly established during the preceding decades and especially clearly reflected in various positivistic trends, came to pieces when faced with the latest discoveries in physics, biology, psychology and other sciences. Former respect for them gave way to profound disappointment, scepticism, and escape into irrational, mystic, and theological conceptions of life, a return to the most backward, obsolete, and reactionary political ideas. Marxist ideas remained a sealed book for the environment in which de Gaulle was brought up. A way out of the crisis was not sought here in a more profound study of reality but in escaping from it or, to be more precise, in distorting that reality in the interests of the dominant social forces. The fears of a class were expressed in denigrating science.

Emile Boutroux, whom de Gaulle mentioned as the first among his spiritual teachers, expounded the idea that natural laws were accidental, imperfect, and transient. Boutroux endeavoured to bring

the development of science in agreement with idealism, with the decisive importance of the spiritual principle.

However, much greater was the influence on de Gaulle of the philosophical theory of Henri Bergson, who was at one time regarded as Boutroux's pupil but who went much farther than his teacher, only it was hard to say where, for his theories are very complex and contradictory. Some of his propositions come close to an understanding of the objective dialectics of life, but his idealistic views are more numerous. Bergson's eclecticism permitted different interpretations of his doctrine varying with the interpreter's intellectual and social inclinations.

Knowledge of Bergson doubtless helped de Gaulle to reinforce certain strong points of his mode of thinking. Bergson realised the universality of mutability, treating development as continual emergence of the qualitatively new. He insisted on the need for action and for realisation of the creative potential. All of this was much to de Gaulle's taste; he cited on several occasions the following proposition of Bergson: "...none of the categories of our thought are exactly applicable to the things of life. We push in vain the living into one or the other of our frames; all the frames crack, they are too narrow, too rigid, particularly for that which we would like to put in them. Our reasoning, so sure of itself when it concerns inert things, feels itself ill at ease on this new terrain." As we shall see below, Charles de Gaulle, distrusting the value of certain old traditional ideas, would often put forward unexpected, bold, and original decisions.

But what were they to be prompted by? To answer this question, we must recall Bergson's theory of intuition and intellect. Bergson believed intuition to be greatly superior to intellect. De Gaulle would always be guided by intuition, making practical decisions in situations in which a great deal was not clear. As distinct from Bergson, de Gaulle in no way belittled the significance of intellect. He wrote that "the human mind should acquire intuition by combining instinct with intelligence".

De Gaulle's inclination towards Bergsonian intuitivism agreed with his basic, most general idea, the primacy of the concept of the nation and its greatness as the supreme value. Indeed, is not patriotism, just as nationalism (two kindred, though by no means identical, concepts) a product not only of intellect but also of innate instincts, feeling, intuition?

De Gaulle was fascinated by Bergson all his life, not least, it seems, because of the superb literary quality of this philosopher's works. It was no accident that later Bergson, the brilliant stylist, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. De Gaulle's characteristic trait was also a propensity for perceiving ideas through literary images.

It should be noted that Charles de Gaulle had no special philosophical schooling. One can hardly take seriously a philosophy class at a Jesuit college! As for the impression Bergson produced on his readers, particularly in the days of our hero's youth, one should bear in mind that the entire style of Bergson's philosophy with its declarations of the freedom of the spirit and the need for creativity proved to be closest to the level of men with a penchant for philosophising without going to the trouble of studying philosophy seriously. That was probably how it was with Charles de Gaulle.

But we have not yet outlined the whole of his spiritual horizon. Another star that radiated a "mysterious fascination" for him was Charles Péguy, famous poet and publicistic writer, a striking, talented, contradictory and complex figure. Born in a peasant family fanatically loyal to the Catholic church, he became a major representative of the progressive intelligentsia already in his youth. During the Dreyfus affair he sided with Republicans and Socialists against militarists, clericals and chauvinists. Péguy was for a while close to Jean Jaurès and Romain Rolland, but later fell a victim to the spiritual crisis among bourgeois intellectuals, becoming a supporter of nationalism and Catholicism. In the 1890s he fiercely opposed Bergson, rejecting his doubts about the value of reason and science, but later turned into a passionate admirer of that philosopher.

Péguy was a talented poet, and even reactionary nationalism emerged ennobled in his writings. He was passionately romantic about France's past, particularly about Joan of Arc, and worshipped the soldiers of the Great French Revolution and Napoleon's Guards. He created a mystical image of motherland enveloped in religious ecstasy, a romantic image of France with its chosen noble destiny. His works naturally found a lively response in the soul of young de Gaulle who had been prepared for them already in his childhood illumined by the patriotic romanticism of Edmond Rostand.

The influence of Charles Péguy is distinctly felt in many of de Gaulle's works and speeches, not to mention direct quotations from the favourite poet of his youth. His images and thoughts would stay with de Gaulle all his life. Their echo is distinctly heard in the first lines of de Gaulle's *War Memoirs* which would appear nearly half a century after the events described here: "All my life I have thought of France in a certain way. This is inspired by sentiment as much as by reason. The emotional side of me tends to imagine France, like the princess in the fairy stories or the Madonna in the frescoes, as dedicated to an exalted and exceptional destiny. Instinctively I have the feeling that Providence has created her either for complete success or for exemplary misfortunes. If, in spite of this, mediocrity shows in her acts and deeds, it strikes me as

an absurd anomaly, to be imputed to the faults of Frenchmen, not to the genius of the land."

As we are now dealing with the years of his youth, when de Gaulle chose his walk in life, we cannot ignore one of the aspects of Péguy's creativity—his passionate admiration for the army, military honour, and France's military glory. The image of the soldier in Péguy's works is linked with the highest ideals and emotions. That was why André Maurois wrote that Péguy "should be read in march time... His prose reminds one of regimental songs". Far from being afraid of the war, he dreamed of it as a means of glorifying France.

However, the work of Maurice Barrès, another nationalistic writer, sounded an even louder drumbeat in de Gaulle's consciousness. Unlike Péguy, he was an outright reactionary already at the time of the Dreyfus affair. But, like the former, he mystified the concept of the nation in polished literary style, developing a nationalistic doctrine of educating the patriotic spirit through careful preservation of the historical traditions of the separate regions of France, particularly of Lorraine, where Barrès himself came from. The nationalistic spirit of Barrès' works became chauvinistic in character when he defended the idea of the war of revenge with Germany, France's eternal enemy.

Barrès' ideological influence on de Gaulle proved just as strong in the field of home politics, in which Barrès, a deputy of the chamber, took an active part. He denounced, ruthlessly and justly, the decaying parliamentary system of the Third Republic, the corruption, political intrigues and cynicism of the ruling élite. But his anti-parliamentarism was reactionary in character, for he aspired to replace the existing system by some form of Republican "strong-arm administration", a nationalistic dictatorship, if not a monarchy.

Later, Jean-Raymond Tournoux, one of de Gaulle's most competent biographers, quoting Barrès' statement, the epitome of his political philosophy, to the effect that "nationalism rules the universe", will stress that "it is exactly what the General thinks deep at heart".

In de Gaulle's young days, many other idols besides Bergson, Péguy and Barrès, turned the heads of bourgeois youth. Of these, mention should be made of Charles Maurras who advertised, noisily and pretensively, his "integral nationalism". Maurras' views largely coincided with ideals already assimilated by de Gaulle. He did not, however, share Maurras' view that restoration of monarchy was vitally needed in the interests of France (much as de Gaulle might regret this fact). De Gaulle realised that archaic royalism would only aggravate the inner conflicts of French society. Besides, Maurras' hatred of democracy led him to extreme excesses of obscurantism which compromised the nationalist idea. In the futu-

re, Maurras would become, in due course of events, Pétain's official philosopher, that is, join the camp hostile to de Gaulle. The General would then drop this remark: "Maurras was so brainy that it drove him mad." However that may be, there can be little doubt about the similarity of some of de Gaulle's political ideas to those of Maurras, with his bias for voluntarist politics.

Incidentally, having published his first book *Discord among the Enemy* (*La discorde chez l'ennemi*), de Gaulle would send him a copy with a dedication: "To Charles Maurras with deference and respect, March 24, 1924.—Ch. de Gaulle."

Because of the influence of Charles Péguy, Maurice Barrès and other writers inspired by patriotic ideals, it has been said that poetry rather than the trumpet of crude chauvinism called de Gaulle to the military career. Indeed, de Gaulle had no sympathy at all for the vulgar chauvinistic and racist views of the League of Patriots headed by the half-crazy fanatic Paul Deroulède, the most extreme of all the supporters of a war of revenge. No, his idea of nation and native land was, in a way, noble and poetic. And he sincerely believed in that idea, as he did in the French army being the best guardian and propagator of the traditions of the past, so dear to his heart. However, all this underlines rather than rules out the determinedness of his position by his family background, environment and education. Nationalists have always skilfully monopolised nobility of spirit, selflessness, and heroic virtues. They presented as sentimental ideological conflicts what was in actual fact self-seeking and base competition of capitalist states.

Of course, de Gaulle's views were superior to the primitive chauvinism of the League of Patriots. Yet did not the whole difference lie in that he belonged to a section of the bourgeoisie with a higher intellectual and cultural level? Besides, he assimilated mostly the conservative aspect of culture. And at the time of de Gaulle's youth French culture was brilliantly represented by such progressive figures as Jean Jaurès in politics and Romain Rolland and Anatole France in literature. They were in no way lesser patriots than Péguy or Barrès, but their patriotism was humane and democratic in nature. It was combined with truly noble aspirations towards a just social transformation of French society. Could it be the reason why they were infinitely remote from the path of spiritual development chosen by de Gaulle and many young men of his age, grown up and brought up in a bourgeois environment? In this milieu, moods and views had firmly taken root that kept developing after the Franco-Prussian war and now sharply grew in intensity due to the revival of France's might and the threat of a new war in Europe, particularly tangible in an atmosphere of continuous Franco-German conflicts.

In his novel *Jean-Christophe*, Romain Rolland brilliantly

showed the development of a nationalistic and militaristic mood amongst the bourgeois youth of France at that time: "The children of the nation who had never seen war except in books had no difficulty in endowing it with beauty. They became aggressive. Weary of peace and ideas, they hymned the anvil of battle, on which, with bloody fists, action would one day new-forged the power of France."

Romain Rolland was a realist; in his works, he created typical images and situations. This is borne out by the case of de Gaulle. Here is what he writes about war in his memoirs recalling his youth: "I must say that in my first youth I pictured this unknown adventure with no horror, and magnified it in anticipation. In short, I was convinced that France would have to go through gigantic trials, that the interest of life consisted in one day rendering her some signal service, and that I would have the occasion to do so."

In the summer of 1908, having graduated at the top of his class from the Collège du Sacré-Coeur, Charles de Gaulle returned to Paris. His decision to become an officer was approved of by the parents, as was his choice of the military school. The special military college of Saint-Cyr, like l'Ecole polytechnique, was by no means open to all. Just as in the past, only the scions of "decent families", those of the gentry and the nobility in the first place, were educated here. Other military schools, like l'Ecole Saint-Maixent or l'Ecole militaire de Saumur, were intended for the offspring of the petty bourgeois. Graduation from Saint-Cyr by itself opened the way for a successful career. It was therefore not too easy to enter that school. But Charles de Gaulle's father had no worries about his son. The Jesuits had long controlled admission to Saint-Cyr; its classes consisted almost entirely of their former pupils, who later became the elite of the army. True, the Jesuits were now officially banished, but they preserved their influence in roundabout clandestine ways. Charles de Gaulle was therefore not surprised when, on entering the collège Stanislas, which prepared young men for Saint-Cyr, he saw among the teachers men whom he knew well from his years at the Jesuit college in the Rue de Vaugirard. His father, too, was director of studies here.

The following year, in August 1909, Charles de Gaulle passed the entrance examinations at Saint-Cyr. The examinations, whose difficulty was legendary, proved easy to him, and not only because he had had good academic training. Before the exams, one had to be accepted by a special committee consisting of officers who were as a rule Jesuit-trained. The committee determined "general suitability" in terms of family background, connections, and reputation. Only the "trustworthy" and "reliable" could pass muster. That was a well-oiled mechanism of social selection which ensured the absolutely reactionary attitudes among the officer caste. Charles

de Gaulle's background clearly testified to his "general suitability", and he was accepted.

His dream thus came true. A way was open to him for joining the army, that great carrier of national honour and glory.

Thus thought many of those lucky young men who were, like de Gaulle, admitted to Saint-Cyr. They were the cream of youth, according to the chauvinists and reactionaries who had selected them. They might be heard to speak in much the same way as the young gentleman and officer, the hero of a work by Paul Bourget who, like Maurice Barrès, sang praises to war: "At the present moment ... there is only one career for men of our name in France, that of soldier... As long as the country itself is in the hands of the scum, and outside, we have to beat Germany, our place is in the only clean spot that is left us—the army..."

In actual fact, the "clean spot" was at the time one big stain. For nearly a century since Napoleon's time, the French army had not won any really glorious victories. On the other hand, it was guilty of a great many senseless bloody crimes and shady undertakings. It was indelibly disgraced by the defeat in the 1870 war symbolised by the word "Sedan". Later, the monstrous massacre of the Paris Communards made the army the people's hangman. A great many colonies had been captured through victories over unarmed natives. The Dreyfus affair revealed the disgusting picture of the corruption among the top brass. The army revenged itself only of French workers in street fights. Adoration of the army, the uniform, and the flag, traditional in France, gave way to distrust and contempt. Characteristically, the annual number of candidates for Saint-Cyr at the end of the century was 2,000, while in 1908 it dwindled to 700. Few men retained, like Charles de Gaulle, their faith and hope. "When I joined the Army," he recalls, "it was one of the greatest things in the world. Beneath all the criticisms and insults which were lavished on it, it was looking forward with serenity and even a muffled hopefulness to the approaching days when everything would depend on it."

While waiting for those days, he was to experience personally the inconvenience of a Republican democracy for the second time in his life. The first time he had had to finish his education in Belgium due to the banishment of Jesuits. Now he was to go through a fresh and unpleasant trial. In March 1905, to bridge in some way the gap dividing the officer caste and the lower ranks in the French army, the Republicans passed a law according to which every young man admitted to Saint-Cyr had to serve as a private for a year.

De Gaulle had grave doubts about a system in which one had to learn to obey before learning to command. He was more inclined to the idea that destiny determines what lot is fitting to everyone. He therefore hated the forthcoming trial believing it to be

completely meaningless. But he also saw the necessity of accepting the inevitable.

So Charles de Gaulle is again in the north, in the old town of Arras, now the administrative centre of the Pas-de-Calais department, a private in the 33rd Infantry Regiment. He is a lanky infantryman in a tight uniform, the heavy Lebel rifle in hand, going about his duties gloomily but without complaint. Sentry duty, drill, exercises, sweeping the vast grounds; the heavy unfamiliar atmosphere of the gloomy barracks. Strange men, rough and primitive, with their dreams of Sunday leave and a bottle of potato spirits, dirty jokes, bad language, the sergeants' rudeness, plain soldiers' food to which he is unaccustomed; in a word, everything as it should be in a provincial garrison.

During the few minutes of leisure Private Charles de Gaulle could console himself by reading one of his favourite authors, the famous Alfred de Vigny, who wrote with such feeling of the soldier's lot. The works of this passionate poet in love with military glory, who sang the high notions of honour and courage, had seriously affected Charles de Gaulle's decision to join the army. But now the attention of the young infantryman is more attracted by those passages in de Vigny's book *Military Servitude and Grandeur* (*Servitude et grandeur militaire*) where de Vigny, a soldier to the core, writes some harsh truths about the soldier's *métier*: "The army is a nation within the nation, it is a vice of our times... That is a body separated from the great body of the Nation, one that looks like the body of an infant, as it lags in its intellect and as it is forbidden for it to grow. The modern army, when it ceases to fight in a war, becomes a sort of gendarmerie. It is ashamed of itself, knowing neither what it does nor what it is..."

Could this fail to sow the seeds of doubt that would inevitably grow in the future? With mixed feelings, the young man agrees that a soldier is "the saddest relic of barbarism existing among men, but also that there is nothing so worthy of the interest and love of the Nation as this sacrificial family that sometimes brings it such glory".

And here is the passage which he needs most of all in his position: "The greatness which a person of noble character can introduce into the army profession seems to me to be less in the glory of fighting than in the honour of suffering in silence and of accomplishing with constancy the duties which are often odious."

Alfred de Vigny would long remain one of de Gaulle's favourite authors, and he would quote him and even learn from him... But at that time he only wanted to pass through the ordeal—and he succeeded. Besides, his lot was not all that hard, after all. There was a stripe on his sleeve to show that he was a candidate for officership and no more than a guest in the barracks. Such men

were largely treated as noncommissioned officers, so that their life in the army was much easier than that of privates. But the main thing was the highly desirable future. Although Charles de Gaulle was even more aloof and supercilious than usual, he performed his modest duties punctiliously. His superiors were asked the reason why this soldier's exemplary behaviour was not rewarded by promotion. To this Captain Tugny made the answer: "Would you like me to promote to sergeant a chap who would not feel at ease unless he was a generalissimo?"

The captain knew what he was talking about. Although his soldier, or, to be more precise, probationer, was a conscientious private, a sergeant's stripes were hardly his dream. At Arras, Charles de Gaulle again sensed the breath of history which made his head swim. This town was once besieged by Richelieu. Later Turenne beat here the great Condé, who then fought together with the Spaniards against the French king. Many other things at Arras reminded one of the past and offered food for thought. De Gaulle thought a great deal less about the life of contemporary France than of its history. And how could that be otherwise when the barrack walls shielded the soldiers of the Republic from everything that stirred the country? Reading papers was not encouraged. If an officer had seen Jaurès' Socialist *L'Humanité* in a private's hands, that would have produced the effect of an exploding bomb, though it was not forbidden to read the chauvinistic *L'Action française* edited by Maurras.

And how did France live then? In late 1905, the law of separating the church from the state was finally passed. The noisy battles which accompanied the banishment of religious congregations slowly died down. As one of the eloquent ministers put it, the celestial lights that had distracted the working people from the earthly affairs were finally extinguished.

But the fires of the battle between the working class and capitalism burned ever brighter. In 1909, that is, the year Charles de Gaulle entered Saint-Cyr, there were 1,025 strikes in France. Class struggle was turning into civil war. More and more often, soldiers were marched from barracks and ordered to shoot at workers. True, in the summer of 1907, the soldiers of one of the regiments of the French army aimed their weapons at the other side. But no one at the barracks dared to discuss that even in whispers. Here many things appeared in a different light, not as they were in real life. The strikes of postal or railway workers were explained to the soldiers as the work of foreign spies. Incidentally, there was a general strike of railwaymen in October 1910, precisely when Charles de Gaulle, having finished his stint as a soldier, was travelling to Saint-Cyr. It began right there in the north, on the line connecting Arras and Paris. It only wanted that he should be late for

school! But his destiny saved him from this unpleasantness; in the remote future he would have a great deal of trouble because of these "meaningless" strikes.

Thus, in October 1910 he became a full-fledged "Cyrard", as Saint-Cyr pupils were dubbed in military jargon. At the age of 20, Charles de Gaulle's looks were superb. A splendid uniform with bright buttons and belt buckle closely fitting his great and graceful frame. Magnificent red epaulets. A high gold-embroidered collar. A shining helmet with fine white and red plumes. White-gloved hands resting confidently on the hilt of his sabre. Confidence and firmness in the straight look of his eyes.

And there he takes his place in line, rifle on his shoulder. He stands in the first rank of the first platoon, first on the right. The child that once watched, enraptured, *The Eaglet*, is now almost two metres tall! He is the only one to stay motionless when the command "Dress!" is shouted; the rest of the rank turn their heads and look at his profile. When the column marches, the accuracy and precision of its movement depends on him, the right-flank man. Could it be that he again remembered his lucky star now?

Two-Metre Charles, as he was immediately nicknamed, was really one of the boys, or so his comrades said. Indeed, concealing his cold pride, he resigned himself without a murmur to what the French term *bizutage*. That is a procedure which every new boy is still put through by the old hands at any educational establishment in France. What was his special punishment? One only had to look at his extremely prominent nose... Of course they made him climb on the table and recite the famous monologue about noses from *Cyrano de Bergerac*. As he knew Rostand by heart, he recited that long text without a stammer. The words came rumbling from somewhere near the ceiling: "It's a rock—a peak—a cape. Did I say 'cape'? An entire peninsula!"

That earned him another nickname, *Cyrano*. Was he really changing, revealing the fun-loving and open-hearted disposition of Rostand's famous character? At times it would appear so, for he kept up with the boys in all kinds of pranks. In one of their amateur performances he played the role of a bridegroom at a country wedding. On another occasion he was given the part of a clown. So what, in his future career he would have to play even worse roles... In the end, many of his friends understood that it was all merely a conscious tribute to camaraderie. Inevitably, his supercilious nature, reserved and arrogant, broke through, so that he got yet another nickname, *le Coq*.

The curriculum and regime at Saint-Cyr were rather strenuous. Classes in military history, geography, topography, administration and law, fortification theory and artillery were combined with field exercises and intense physical training. Fencing, gymnastics, riding,

shooting, and of course, the inevitable (lowly, in the view of some) duties of cleaning weapons, equipment, footwear, the premises. Everything planned from reveille to taps. There were also breathing spaces of an hour or two. As always, Charles de Gaulle read a great deal or went for walks with his friends, or rather men with whom he could talk. From his youth and to the end of his days the only person close to him would be himself. He had no particular contacts with the future Marshal Juin or General Béthouart, who were his classmates and whose destinies would many years later run parallel with his own life. His more or less constant companions were Siéyès, Mennerat and Ditte. Debating and arguing, the young men took walks under the maples and elms near Saint-Cyr-l'École, a small town near Versailles. They passed by an ancient pavilion where once Louis XIV met his favourite, Marquise de Maintenon, who in 1686 founded at Saint-Cyr a school for the daughters of the nobility, where a military school was established under Napoleon.

Subjects for conversation were plentiful. Not too well equipped to understand the essence of the new political conflicts tearing up France, they condemned the Republican politicians fussing and forming one cabinet after another. They were indignant about the antimilitarist propaganda of the Socialists, of which they had an extremely distorted view from the chauvinistic newspapers.

Of course, military problems were of particular interest to the future officers. The threat of war was becoming more and more tangible. Europe was already split into two hostile military coalitions: the Entente, that is, France, Great Britain, and Russia, on the one hand, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, on the other. Both camps armed themselves to the teeth, getting ready for a war for a re-division of the world. Kaiser's Germany rattled its sabres louder than others. German imperialists believed that they had been done out of their fair share of colonies and thus had greedy designs on neighbouring France which had managed, despite the 1870 rout, to build an enormous colonial empire. Precisely at that time, in the 1900s, France fought to establish its dominion over Morocco.

On July 1, 1911, the German gunboat *Panther* unexpectedly entered the Moroccan port of Agadir, and soon the redoubtable silhouette of the cruiser *Berlin* appeared there instead of the small ship. The German press enthusiastically greeted that operation. "Hurra! We Act!" wrote one of the papers. There was a smell of powder in the air. But things did not go that far, since not all of the Entente countries were ready for war. Yet everybody realised that that was merely a delay. The Agadir crisis made even the extreme optimists realise that war was near.

Charles de Gaulle, just as most of his comrades at Saint-Cyr, had no fear of the war. These young nationalists dreamed of the time when triumphant France would win back Alsace and Lorraine,

extend her territory to the natural border, the Rhine, increase her colonial might and become, by the strength of her arms, the most powerful state of Europe. The question, as they saw it, was where that strength of arms would lie, and how the French army should be equipped and organised. The future officers argued primarily about the role of the various services, the new military technical equipment, and the various projects for the reform of the French army. Heated debate was provoked, for instance, by General Joffre's statement: "Aviation? That is a sport. For the army, that is zero!"

On October 1, 1912, Charles de Gaulle graduated from Saint-Cyr and was commissioned as a junior lieutenant. His labours placed him 15th in a class of 211, which was quite an achievement. But he had also made some evil-wishers, because of his temper. One of his instructors characterised him thus: "average in all respects except stature." Ironically, at the ceremony of commissioning one of the major political figures of France in the 20th century gave the traditional oath that he would never engage in politics.

The best graduates of Saint-Cyr were given the choice of their first appointment. Charles de Gaulle had also won that right, and he now faced the question: where should he begin his service? Traditionally, the most prestigious service was cavalry, and last on this scale, as everywhere, was long-suffering infantry. However strange that may seem at first glance, our junior lieutenant chose precisely the thankless lot of an infantryman. Moreover, he decided to serve in that very 33rd Infantry Regiment at Arras where he had gone through his service in the ranks. Charles de Gaulle would always surprise everyone by his unexpected decisions, but this one was not as rash as it might seem. Picturesque cavalry inevitably lost its former glory in the epoch of mass use of machine-guns, while artillery was regarded as a kind of auxiliary service in France; but infantry remained the main striking force called upon to perform those really great deeds of which de Gaulle dreamed. True, there were also the particularly fashionable Navy and aviation, which was then coming into being. But these services required highly specialised training.

Born at Lille and linked with the north through his mother's and grandmother's origin, he had a longing for the parts where he intended to serve. In character and temperament he was close to the traditions and spirit of the inhabitants of the northern provinces sharply differing from those of the south. Charles de Gaulle was fascinated by the history of France, chiefly by military history, and it was mostly in the north that the great battles had taken place which he knew as if he had fought in them himself. He was convinced that the north would also inevitably be the scene of the battles to come.

Finally, Charles de Gaulle knew, of course, that the newly appointed commander of 33rd Infantry was Philippe Pétain, well known in the army not only for his obstreperousness and frictions with his superiors, which adversely affected his career, but also for his critical attitude to the official military doctrine. Pétain was extremely conservative. Ignoring the new law segregating the church from the state, he openly encouraged officers to attend Mass regularly. In any case he had the reputation of an intelligent, ener-

getic, and exacting officer who could be a good teacher of the military craft.

The moment came when the raw young officer, his fresh epauletts glittering, reported to his colonel. The 22-year-old junior lieutenant, black-eyed, very tall, stood for the first time face-to-face with the 56-year-old colonel ironically looking at him with his pale-blue eyes. So different in age and rank, they nevertheless showed mutual liking. De Gaulle's destiny would for a long time be linked with Pétain...

The young officer who would serve for many years under Colonel (later Marshal) Pétain, would feel great respect for his patron. It is interesting that even after Pétain's disgrace at the end, when he became France's traitor, de Gaulle would retain something of that feeling. He would write in his memoirs: "My first colonel, Pétain, showed me the meaning of the gift and art of command."

Thus de Gaulle began his career. One cannot say, however, that his education was ended. His service as an officer strengthened and deepened some of his character traits. Professional soldiers were a world in itself not only with regard to the nation but also to the variable elements in the army, the men called up for service in the ranks and the reserve officers. The caste spirit was at that time extremely strong in the French army, which largely retained the structure and traditions of the monarchist army despite the numerous attempts of the Republic to democratise it. While it had proved possible to impose heavy restrictions on the church, this other institution of the old regime was unshakeable. Officially, the army functioned according to the 1832 law, adopted under Louis-Philippe. Even after the exposures of the Dreyfus affair nothing had changed; the army remained a state within the state. Officers were encouraged in their feelings of disdain towards civilians in general and towards the deputies, parliament, and the government in particular. Strange as it may seem, the fact that the army had no franchise and was formally outside politics only served to foster that contempt and to strengthen the officers' opposition to everything civilian. It is easy to see that this tendency coincided with young de Gaulle's anti-parliamentarism.

The very position of the professional commander giving orders, taking decisions under extreme circumstances which involve his subordinates' life and death, the prerogatives of discipline which rules out debating orders and even the right of the subordinates to discuss them—all of this inevitably emphasises the authoritarian traits of a person's character. And in de Gaulle these traits were extremely pronounced. Earlier, too, he had difficulty in making human contacts, while his position as an officer compelled him to recognise solitude as a natural phenomenon. Military service deforms man, developing his arrogance, superciliousness, pride, partic-

ularly if, as was the case here, there is a predisposition towards these qualities.

Despite his low rank and position, de Gaulle performed his duties with exceptional zeal and sense of responsibility. Noncommissioned officers disliked the pedantic young commander. They believed that Charles de Gaulle, with his meticulousness, merely got in their way. His superiors, on the other hand, favoured this ardour in the performance of duties. In 1913, Colonel Pétain wrote in de Gaulle's personal military dossier that he "has proved from the beginning to be an officer of real worth who raises high hopes for the future". Pétain also wrote at the time: "Very intelligent, passionately devoted to his profession. Handled his platoon perfectly on manoeuvres. Worthy of all praise." In October 1913 de Gaulle was promoted to lieutenant.

Neither at that time nor later did he curry favour with his superiors. On the contrary, he was as headstrong as ever. True, it was not a case of reckless refractoriness. One should perhaps mention a curious episode. During a lecture before his young officers, Colonel Pétain told them of the siege of Arras in 1654 and of the manoeuvres of Condé who pressed the royal troops by turning their flank at Rocquencourt. Suddenly the young Lieutenant de Gaulle interrupted the Colonel: "But Turenne was there and soon let the thunder of his guns be heard. ...Arras was saved!" This looked tactless, of course, but the point was that Pétain had long opposed the official doctrine based on the primacy of movement, the bayonet and attack, insisting on the primary significance of artillery fire. Therefore the remark concerning the decisive role of artillery (whatever its form) was not unpleasant to the admirer of that arm. The young officer thus showed not only self-assurance but also a certain adroitness, not to mention a fine knowledge of military history.

The monotonous life with the regiment did not diminish de Gaulle's intellectual curiosity. In his map case one might find copies of Péguy's *Cahiers de la quinzaine*. This puzzled some and made others suspicious. No wonder: Péguy retained his reputation of being alien and dangerous to the army even after he became a zealous nationalist. His close contacts with Socialists and particularly his siding with the opponents of the army in the Dreyfus affair were still not forgiven him. Even now he continued to publish in his magazine the enormous novel *Jean-Christophe* by the antimilitarist Romain Rolland. At the bourgeois houses in Arras, which de Gaulle sometimes visited, the hosts were shocked when they saw the newspaper *Le Temps*, quite moderate and extremely bourgeois, in his hands. Here, even this paper was regarded as too Republican. In his reading, de Gaulle demonstrated a breadth of vision quite unusual for his milieu. Yet his colleagues did not need to worry, for even after reading *The New Army* (*L'Armée nouvelle*) by Jean

Jaurès, the great antimilitarist and leader of the Socialist Party, he remained quite alien to the plans, developed in that book, for creating a true army of the people, which could only be conceivable in a socialist France. Incidentally, a great deal in Jaurès' book, where it touches on history, coincides with the ideas of our steadfast young conservative. Jaurès admired de Gaulle's favourite heroes, the legendary generals Condé, Turenne, and Carnot.

The appearance of Jaurès' book *The New Army* in 1911 was by no means accidental. The great pacifist took up the military theme, quite unexpectedly it would seem, because that theme became the firm focus of the whole of France's life. Although the conflict between France and Germany over Morocco had been apparently settled, the tension between the two countries, far from diminishing, flared up from time to time. The Balkans, where one "local war", as we now call them, broke out after another, became Europe's powder-magazine. It could explode at any minute.

Thus, in December 1912, Europe found itself on the brink of a general war. The war of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece against Turkey seemed to be nearing its end. There was a threat to Constantinople, and the Turks agreed to a truce. But Austria-Hungary continued mobilising its army. Because of this, Russia held in readiness a giant force on the Austrian border. The Russians kept on in the army those soldiers who had served their time; they also prohibited the export of horses. Only recently, France's attitude to the Balkan conflicts was restrained, but Raymond Poincaré, who headed at that time the French government, represented the circles decisively headed for a war, and he was sorely tempted. The French generals led him to believe that if Austria attacked Russia in defence of Turkey, and the Russians pounced on Berlin, the road would be open to Alsace and Lorraine. But reason prevailed this time. Russia insisted that she was not ready yet. Neither was France.

She had 480,000 under arms at the time. The German army numbered 830,000. A difference of 350,000! As for trained reserves, here too the comparison was not in France's favour. And still her ruling circles were bent on war. "Forty years of peace, that is too much!" the chauvinists yelled. In January 1913 Poincaré, the main political proponent of this course, was elected President of the French Republic. And he could hardly be described as a pacifist. When the retiring president Fallières left the Palais de l'Elysée, he was heard to mumble: "I gave way to war."

In March 1913, the law was passed increasing compulsory military service in France from two to three years. In this way it was hoped that the gap in the numbers of the German and French armies would be bridged. The implementation of the new law, however, would increase the strength of the French army only by 157,000. The gap would still remain too great. France also set

its hopes, of course, on the allies, the famous British Navy and particularly Russia's infinite manpower, the famed hardiness and courage of the Russian soldier.

But the greatest hopes reposed, of course, in the French army; to be more precise, there was a blind faith in the protestations of the generals heading it, that it was the best possible army fully prepared for war. All that had happened before the Franco-Prussian war was now repeating itself. All the lessons had been forgotten. The generals' caste, which fully inherited the most archaic of the royal and Bonapartist traditions and jealously guarded its privileges against interference from the civilian authorities in its affairs, enjoyed blind trust. The defectiveness of the main principles of waging the imminent war was obvious to many, but any criticism merely enhanced the self-assurance of the top brass.

What was the gist of the French military doctrine, which was declared to be absolutely infallible? Its basis was the decisive role of the regular army and neglect for the reserves that would be called up during mobilisation, that is, for the greater part of the troops. The fact that the future war would be fought by heretofore unknown armed masses was entirely disregarded. In 1913, the chairman of the committee for infantry stated: "The ideal is to begin the campaign without reservists." In tactics, everything was based on the theory of advance at any price and under any conditions. The 1913 field regulations consciously ignored the technique of digging trenches and generally the use of terrain for building reliable lines of defence. As for military technical equipment, the French doctrine openly ignored the new developments here, believing them to be too complicated. In 1909, a General Staff spokesman declared that absence of heavy artillery was good for the army. Right before the war, artillery technical services firmly resisted the implementation of a programme for organising heavy artillery. In 1910, the commander of French infantry declared that machine-guns were nonsense. And we have already mentioned the neglect for aviation.

Lieutenant Charles de Gaulle himself saw some vices in the policy of the General Staff. Besides, Colonel Pétain, an undisputed authority for him at that time, criticised the General Staff for neglecting artillery. Even in his modest position as a junior officer, de Gaulle could note certain disquieting circumstances. He saw that the soldiers' battle training was done nearly all the year round on the drill ground, and only two weeks every year did the troops spend on manoeuvres in the field. The striking orderly columns of French troops reminded one of pictures from a remote past. Both officers and men wore uniforms virtually unchanged since the Second Empire; the famous bright-red trousers would soon become excellent targets for Germans, and would be replaced already during

the war. He could not help but recall the catchword that France's best army was again precisely one war behind!

But what did these doubts and worries of the young lieutenant count in the face of the firm faith in the wisdom of generals in which he had been brought up? Probably he did not know a lot. The main thing was doing one's duty under all circumstances. At that time he interpreted the notion of duty, so dear to his heart, in a quite definite sense. The essence of a soldier's duty was discipline, obedience, blind faith. He was therefore unafraid of war, awaiting it, moreover, with an intuitive hope for France's chosen and unusual destiny created by his imagination, for her national genius and omnipotent providence which would arouse in all Frenchmen a single invincible will to win.

Alas, that was where the gravest doubts assailed him. Although the nationalistic movement did not abate, events of quite a different sort also occurred. The law increasing military service to three years stirred up a strong protest. In several cities even soldiers joined demonstrations in their discontent at having to serve an extra year. Jaurès' powerful voice rumbled across the whole of France, protesting against war. That strengthened the Socialists' positions. During the spring 1914 elections the Socialists won 1.5 million votes, and the number of their representatives in parliament grew from 72 to 102. The Socialists took the decision to counteract war with a general strike, provided the International decided to hold such a strike in other countries as well, in the first place in Germany.

Charles de Gaulle watched these events in alarm. Would France indeed be split in the face of a deadly national threat? That would mean that his firm faith in the infinite superiority of the national idea and the interests of the nation over all the class, ideological, political, and religious strife, a faith on which the whole of de Gaulle's world outlook rested, was erroneous! Was the nation indeed a relic and a survival of history rather than its true motive force?

Events then came which alone could answer the question that worried the young adherent of the absolute primacy and power of the national idea. The assassination on June 28, 1914 of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand brought about an unprecedented European crisis that resulted in the start of the First World War on August 3. What happened next was interpreted by de Gaulle as a complete confirmation of the correctness of his idea of nation as the decisive and overriding factor of history. Torn by inner conflicts for nearly forty years, France became united in a matter of days and even hours. Even the Socialists became patriots, after Jaurès, the only honest man among their leaders, was foully murdered on July 31. A "sacred union" of all the political parties of France came into being. There was no need even to arrest the opponents of war

included beforehand in the secret "List B", (Carnet B) as was originally planned. True, the Socialists of the other countries, and in the first place of Germany and Austria, acted in the same way, supporting their governments.

De Gaulle himself thus described the emergence of the "sacred union": "It was enough for France to draw her sword for the passions to find themselves in unison. Flowing from the crowd to the individuals, they envelop the latter in an irresistible ardour. Everything that can facilitate cohesion—patriotism, religious faith, hope, hatred for the enemy—is immediately encouraged and favoured by everyone. On the contrary, the theories of which one could believe that they would form obstacles to the movement, wither away. Not a single group is found that would condemn the mobilisation. Not a single trade union thinks of interfering with it through strike action. In parliament, not a single vote lacks in the ballot for war credits. The share of evaders, evaluated by the official estimates at 13 per cent of the call-up, does not reach 1.5 per cent. 350,000 volunteers besiege enlistment bureaux. Frenchmen living abroad take trains and ships by storm to rally round their country. The suspects included in the "List B" pray to be sent into the fire. 3,000 peace-time deserters could be seen arriving at the border begging for the honour to fight."

Yes, that was precisely the way France looked in early August 1914. At last her image was the one which Charles de Gaulle always had in his mind. For a few days and probably weeks the country was indeed enveloped in a wave of genuine patriotic enthusiasm. But it was caused not so much by the truly mystical transport strikingly described here by de Gaulle as by numerous and quite real causes. The Socialists' joining the "sacred union" was the logical climax of the opportunistic degeneration of the Second International, and the mass patriotic psychosis, a natural consequence of the many years of nationalistic propaganda stirring up the memory of the national humiliation of 1870. Besides, the war seemed at first glance defensive, for Germany, a monarchist Germany run by the Prussian Junkers, was the attacker in August 1914, which made things look as if revolutionary war against feudalism was taken up again. The French believed in the noble goals of the war all the more willingly as they were promised a quick and easy victory, a kind of promenade to Berlin to the strains of the *Marseillaise*. In a word, in the first days of August 1914, the French indeed went to war with an easy heart.

But does the nationalist enthusiasm of August 1914 prove that the national idea is the motive force of history, that it pushes into the background all the social and political conflicts and contradictions? In actual fact, the war made them deep and acute as never before. De Gaulle himself admitted later in his memoirs that France

emerged from the war "with her social structure and moral balance overthrown". Of course, young de Gaulle's ideas and feelings caused by the war and his conviction that the nation is the highest value were not completely groundless illusions. Motherland, nation, patriotism—all these notions correspond to real phenomena. The idea of native country is not a false idea but a limited one, and it does not at all cover the whole complexity of life. There are other factors in history, not less real and tangible. Charles de Gaulle, however, preferred not to notice their much greater role.

Will the tragic vicissitudes of the world war, which overthrew many familiar notions and concepts in the minds of hundreds of millions, also affect Charles de Gaulle's views? Let us follow him along the roads of war, which he fought with the honour and dignity of a true soldier on whose shoulders fell the full share of the misfortunes of the great tragedy. Thirty years later, listening to his niece Geneviève's account of her imprisonment in one of Hitler's death camps, he remarked that the trials of the First World War had meant the same to him...

Lieutenant de Gaulle, not yet 24, went through a baptism of fire in the very first days of war. Without regard for the strength and intentions of the enemy and the true potential of the French army itself, the French supreme command launched an offensive, in accordance with the previously worked out "Plan XVII," at several sectors of the front, in the direction of Alsace, Lorraine, and Belgium. The 1st Battalion of the 33rd Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division, where de Gaulle served, crossed the Belgian border and moved towards Namur. The battalion happened to be precisely in the sector where the Germans delivered their main push. The Schlieffen Plan was put into action, which was worked out as early as 1905 and was well known to the French generals, who arrogantly ignored it. The German armies invaded Belgium to move into France at the most convenient and poorly defended sector of the border. The so-called "border battle" began.

Lieutenant de Gaulle had not yet smelled powder. For the first time in his life he was going to see something which he believed to be his true vocation—a real war. At first everything went on just like during manoeuvres. But then the picture changed abruptly. In his book *France and Her Army* (*La France et son armée*) de Gaulle gave these impressions of his first battle: "Suddenly enemy fire becomes accurate and concentrated. With each second, the hail of bullets and the thunder of shells increase. The survivors throw themselves on the ground pell-mell among the groaning wounded and the humble dead. The affected calmness of officers, who let themselves be killed on their feet, the fixed bayonets of some hard-fighting units, bugles sounding the call to charge, the last bounds of isolated heroes—nothing works. At a glance, it would

seem that the courage of the whole world could not prevail against the fire."

De Gaulle is calm under fire, at least externally. But his tall figure, so striking at a parade, is a very convenient target. He was wounded for the first time on August 15, 1914, when his battalion defended the bridge across the river Meuse near the small Belgian town of Dinant. The wound was not dangerous but serious enough for him to be sent to the hospital at Arras. An endless stream of refugees and soldiers rolled through the town, from the north to the south. The Germans continued their offensive, pressing the French troops into the country's interior. The pace of events was frenetic. The frontline implacably moved upon Arras lying on the road to Paris. De Gaulle would not wish to fall into the hands of Germans in the first weeks of the war. Alone, he left Arras for Paris and later Lyons, to heal his wound.

In the meantime, the Germans stood before the suburbs of Paris. On September 2, the government fled to Bordeaux. Would Paris again be besieged, as in 1870? One can easily imagine the mood of de Gaulle and of other Frenchmen who had set out, a month before, on a march towards Berlin. The ill-famed French military doctrine and "Plan XVII" based on it flopped in the first weeks of the war. The implementation of that doctrine cost France an additional half-million dead. Only the decision of the High Command to act in a way entirely opposite to its original intentions saved France. Defensive lines were organised, and after a bloody battle on the Marne the Germans were compelled to retreat. Although some generals, like Gallieni, showed bold initiative, the success on the Marne was not consolidated. Still, that gigantic battle largely predetermined the outcome of the war. France was able to stand the trials of those first weeks because the German High Command had to transfer considerable forces from the western front to the east to defend Prussia against the advancing Russian army. In 1944, General de Gaulle would say of this: "When in 1914 Germany and Austria-Hungary began their offensive, the Russian advance in Prussia considerably facilitated our restoration on the Marne."

The first combat experiences are never forgotten. During several weeks de Gaulle saw many things that would forever remain in his memory. In the meantime the lieutenant recovered from his wound, and two months after receiving it he was back in line. His regiment was then at the front in Champagne. The hostilities were now centred on the Eastern front, where the Russians contained with difficulty the German offensive. The French High Command used the lull on the Western front in 1915 to compensate for its unpreparedness for war through intense armament and various organisational measures. Trench warfare replaced mobile war-

fare, the armies dug into the ground. Operations were mostly on a local scale. De Gaulle took an active part in them. In January 1915 he was cited in the 2nd Division order of the day, which is traditionally regarded in the French army as a great distinction. The citation was for "executing a series of reconnaissances of enemy positions under perilous conditions and reporting precious information". Colonel Claudel, who commanded the regiment, appointed this earnest and daring officer his aide.

In early March, the fighting in Champagne became more violent. The French mounted several offensive operations. On March 10, near Le Mesnil-les-Hurles de Gaulle was wounded a second time. Only in June 1915 could he return to his regiment. On September 3 he was promoted to captain, and on October 30, appointed commander of the 10th company.

At the beginning of 1916, the German High Command decided to transfer the focus of hostilities back to the Western front, launching a powerful offensive at the key point in the French defence, Verdun. The assault, personally supervised by Kaiser Wilhelm II and the crown prince, began on February 22 with an unprecedented artillery barrage, real drum-fire. The French troops could not stand it and began to withdraw. After five days of pitched battle the Germans pushed seven kilometres ahead.

The First Army Corps, which included the 33rd Infantry Regiment, was sent to Verdun's rescue. At night, Captain de Gaulle and his men arrived in lorries at fort Douaumont, which had just been taken by the Germans. At this point in the battle, what both sides wanted most was a breathing space. The commanding officer entrusted de Gaulle with the task of replacing the soldiers in the front line with the newly arriving reinforcements. His own company he placed right near the fort. The cloudy morning of the following day, which revealed to the eye the shell-raked earth covered with corpses, did not bring a renewal of hostilities, as everyone had expected. The respite, during which Captain de Gaulle was tensely awaiting an attack, lasted 48 hours. Suddenly the relative calm gave way to infernal thunder. An avalanche of fire and steel hit the French. The casualties were terrific, but they hardly had time to count them, for the Germans rose to attack. French machine-guns were powerless to stop them. The situation became desperate. Suddenly de Gaulle heard: "Look, my Captain, reinforcements coming!" De Gaulle turned round: those were Germans who had replaced their pointed helmets with the flat French ones which they had taken off the dead. What was left of the 10th company was surrounded. De Gaulle tried to organise all-around defence, but the pressure on all sides was too great. Then, gathering the handful of soldiers left of the company, de Gaulle led them in a bayonet charge to try to break through the enemy lines. During the

fierce hand-to-hand fighting, the Captain suddenly felt a terrible blow and fell unconscious.

The French in the other lines could see the few remaining soldiers of the 10th company being shot down and its commander fall. Colonel Boudhors wrote of it all to de Gaulle's family. The Captain was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour for his feat. The order of the day signed by General Pétain, who directed the defence of Verdun together with General Castelnau, read: "Captain de Gaulle, commanding the company, reputed for his high intellectual and moral qualities, at a time when his battalion, subjected to a terrible bombardment, was decimated and the enemy attacked the company on all sides, led his men in a furious charge and a fierce fight at close quarters, the only solution which he believed compatible with his idea of military honour. Fell in the mêlée. A peerless officer."

"He who is believed dead will live longer than all the others," the French say. Indeed, de Gaulle sustained a grievous wound in the thigh and, unconscious, was taken prisoner. When he came to and opened his eyes, he saw, as he later recounted, Germans with whom he had fought in the fierce hand-to-hand combat among those around him.

Thus began his captivity, which lasted nearly three years, or, to be precise, 32 months. During this time he was moved from prison to prison and from camp to camp—Stettin, Rosenberg, Friedberg, Magdeburg, Ludwigshafen, Ingolstadt. From the first day of his captivity to the last he never ceased thinking of escaping from the camp, returning to France and continuing to fight. Five times he attempted to escape. Once he got hold of a German uniform, changed into it and left the camp. But the trousers barely covered the knees, and the sleeves just reached his elbows. Despite the tragedy of the situation, one can imagine how comic the picture was; naturally he stood out in the crowd as a sore thumb, and was quickly put back in the camp. On another occasion he managed to get to the very border, but was caught there; his tall stature let him down again. Yet he stubbornly continued to search for new modes of escape. The well-known pilot Rolland Garros, who in 1913 was the first to fly over the Mediterranean, was in the same camp as de Gaulle. Together, they decided to dig a tunnel. They dug hard for a long time, but in the end hit rock, and besides, the Germans discovered the tunnel. For this, Charles de Gaulle was moved to a camp for the incorrigible and "recidivists", that is, for those officers who had attempted escape several times. That was Fort IX at Ingolstadt, Bavaria.

For an active man, there can hardly be anything worse than forced inactivity. The years spent in captivity are therefore de Gaulle's gloomiest years. Yet in some respects they proved very

fruitful. In the camp, where the conditions were, in fact, not too severe, he led an intense spiritual life, doing a great deal of thinking and reading everything that came to hand. When there was nothing to read, he went in his mind through the classics, both antique and French, of which he had a fine knowledge. Reading German newspapers, he closely followed the course of the war. He often made notes, which later took the shape of his first book *Discord among the Enemy*.

The prisoners-of-war introduced what variety they could in their boring life not only by games of cards, songs, and endless conversation. De Gaulle made regular reports on the course of military operations, which luckily were taking a turn favourable for France. A professor of history who happened to be in the camp delivered lectures. The captive officers also held discussions on strategy and tactics, the experiences of the war and its possible consequences.

There were among his fellow prisoners those with whom he would meet in the future. Apart from French officers, there were British and Russian ones here. The 23-year-old Russian officer Tukhachevsky, fine-looking, vigorous and bold, stood out among the prisoners; he dreamed of little else but escape and return to his native land. De Gaulle often talked to him and taught him French. Many years later de Gaulle would remember Tukhachevsky.

As for de Gaulle himself, he produced a strong impression on his fellow prisoners with his extraordinary memory, knowledge of military history, intellect, and passion for reading. Naturally, they were also aware of his character traits, the peremptory tone of his judgments, his desire to be always infallible, his proud aloofness, and at times arrogance. He was nicknamed *le Connétable*, that is, the king's commander-in-chief. Strangely, different men at different times and under different circumstances, unknown to one another, called him that. There must have been something about his image, it seems, which evoked this association with the ancient captains of French kings.

Once, after one of their political debates, another prisoner, a French officer who had been a university professor before the war, asked de Gaulle: "Why don't you go in for politics?" "If I were not a soldier..." answered de Gaulle, adding: "In politics, experience is the only formative factor." It is interesting that he did not exclude already at that time the possibility of political activity.

However, de Gaulle had not yet exhausted the opportunities offered by a military career. He felt that particularly acutely in November 1918, when the war ended in a defeat for Germany and the prisoners-of-war were sent back home. De Gaulle returned to France, to Dordogne, to the family estate La Ligerie. In spring 1919, the whole family gathered there. De Gaulle's three brothers had also fought, had been wounded and awarded medals, and they had all

survived the war. A rare and lucky destiny for a French family!

Charles de Gaulle's feats during the war had won him the Cross of the Legion of Honour, the Cross of War, and three citations. But now he was merely a captain without any position, where as his fellow officers had attained a great deal more in command posts and particularly at headquarters. He was not envious, of course; De Gaulle never compared himself to others. He would have a different destiny. But the years of captivity had indeed made his career during the war somehow incomplete; he was half-retired, as it were, and therefore gloomy and reticent more than usually.

Of course, thanks to the allies' assistance and at the cost of enormous casualties, France had won the war, winning back Alsace and Lorraine. But what was its condition now? Sadly, he compared the atmosphere of nationalistic enthusiasm preceding 1914, when the spirit of Péguy and Barrès intoxicated the consciousness of the young people, with the apathy and indifference predominant now. The "sacred union", which pleased de Gaulle so greatly in August 1914, had proved to be ephemeral. All former conflicts and "meaningless" factions were renewed already during the war, becoming acute as never before. Political intrigues, behind-the-scenes machinations, the hypocrisy and lies of politicians, the orgy of profiteering, making money from the war—all of this became particularly onerous in the murky light of the military events. The social contradictions grew even more pronounced under war conditions, despite the nationalists' incantations about the unity of the nation. In 1917, 300,000 workers went on strikes. The most disquieting feature was that the army, worn out by the war, was at the point of a revolutionary uprising. It came to using artillery against the rebellious soldiers.

De Gaulle wrote in his memoirs that he was privileged to see France "later, though exhausted from losses and devastation, with her social structure and moral balance overthrown, resume with tottering steps her march towards her destiny, while the regime, taking once more its former shape and repudiating Clemenceau, rejected greatness and returned to confusion".

In this "chaos", de Gaulle could only look forward to an inconspicuous post of an infantry officer in some out-of-the-way garrison in an army doomed to peace. In a private conversation de Gaulle once said: "War, that is terrible, but peace, well, peace is so boring, to tell the truth." But he was unexpectedly offered a chance to continue the war, and fighting against Germans, at that. It was like this. The Polish General Joseph Haller recruited volunteers among French officers to fight the Bolsheviks with the Polish army. But what had it to do with Germany? That will become clear if one recalls the blind fury aroused by the October 1917 revolution in Russia among the French bourgeoisie. There was little said of the

real causes of this attitude—the foreign loans raised by Czarist Russia in France, wasted capital investments, Russian markets lost to France, etc. As for de Gaulle, he had a profound contempt for economic and social matters. For this reason the deep essence of events often escaped him. What he considers first and last is the nation as a kind of mystical community of traditions, psychology, ideas and emotions.

Indignation against Bolsheviks took the noble shape of concern about the French national interests. It was the Bolsheviks who had pushed Russia to conclude a separate peace with Germany, thereby dealing a blow to the Allies, and in the first place to France. The French ambassador to Russia Noulens stated in January 1919 that through the Bolsheviks Russia had become Germany's booty, which would inevitably be used for preparing a new war against France.

In early 1919, when de Gaulle had just returned from captivity, such statements were voiced in a mighty chorus. The French bourgeoisie would gladly launch a war against Soviet Russia, if it were not for the people's resistance. It was at that time that an uprising broke out in the French fleet lying off Odessa, and it had to be promptly withdrawn. But the French ruling circles used all possible channels for indirect intervention. For instance, recruiting of French officers to the White Polish army was therefore encouraged. The burden of the anti-Bolshevik hysteria was that Bolsheviks and Germany were closely linked, so that the struggle against Bolsheviks was at the same time the struggle against Germany and in France's interests. De Gaulle would have preferred to fight directly against Germans, but there was no chance of that in the near future; his unslaked thirst for military exploits was so great that he decided to go to the east.

In May 1919 de Gaulle was already in Sillé-Le-Guillaume, a small town in the Sarthe department, where the 5th Polish Division of Chasseurs was stationed. He conducted there tactical exercises with the Polish officers, and then went to the Vistula to continue teaching Polish officers. He was promoted to major in the Polish army. True, in the French army this rank was invalid, and upon his return he became captain again. But in Poland he wore two stars on his kepi, just like a brigadier-general in France. De Gaulle took part in the operations against the Red Army in Volyn and at Warsaw commanding a mixed infantry and tank unit. For this, he got a citation in the order of the day by General Weygand, head of the French military mission.

In February 1921 de Gaulle ended his career as a mercenary, returning to France with a St. Wenceslas Cross. So ended Charles de Gaulle's "Polish adventure", as several biographers call it. In his *War Memoirs*, he devoted precisely five words to his sojourn in Poland.

Charles de Gaulle is 30. At this age, a man must start a family, at least a decent Catholic should, and the captain is precisely that by origin and upbringing. But he has no personal attachments. And could there be any such attachments in a man of strict and even puritanical virtue that Charles de Gaulle always was? True, some authors of works about de Gaulle write that during his stay in Poland he had a very nice relationship with the young and charming Polish lady Czetwertynska whom he was alleged to have met at the Blikle café famous for its cakes, the best in Warsaw. But that is a more than doubtful story. De Gaulle could hardly have been involved in an affair of this kind, for he even censured Philippe Pétain, whom he then respected so much, for his excessive weakness for the fair sex.

Charles de Gaulle's personal affairs were often discussed by his mother and a friend of the house, Mme Denquin, Charles' father's godmother. She came from a respectable family of Calais and knew all the marriageable young ladies of this city—within a definite circle, of course. It was she who thought of Yvonne Vendroux, the daughter of an owner of confectionary factories at Calais as well as Douai and Dunkirk. On her father's side the family came from Holland, where his ancestors, the Van Droogs, at one time grew and sold tobacco. Becoming established in France, they founded a cigar factory, but switched to pastry-making after the nationalisation of the tobacco industry. One of Yvonne Vendroux's ancestors on her mother's side was a colonel who took part in the United States' War of Independence together with La Fayette. The Vendroux family possessed the castle Sept-Fontaines in the Ardennes. In short, the future bride's family background was highly satisfactory.

The girl had just turned twenty, she was good-looking, modest, came from a respectable family and had an excellent education. Yvonne had studied at the Collège de Saint-Agnès founded by the Dominican Fathers. It educated the daughters of the solid bourgeois of the northern departments. True, the girl once said that she would never marry a military man, but Mme Denquin was quite confident that once she saw the splendid captain, he would immediately give up her firm resolve.

The two young people "accidentally" met at the 1920 autumnal *Salon*. They stopped at a picture of Edmond Rostand's little son. Of course, the captain rose to the occasion magnificently: it was not for nothing that he knew the whole of Rostand by heart! On the same day both families met for tea at a confectioner's in the Champs-Élysées, Mme Denquin supervising the whole affair. Naturally, Yvonne sat with Charles. The young lady was enchanted by the grave and reticent but extremely courteous and well-educated young man with two military crosses. True, when they returned home, she said: "Mama, I believe he finds me too small for him." But he did not, and events followed one upon another at a forced tempo. The following week Yvonne and her brother Jacques were invited to a grand ball at l'Ecole polytechnique at Versailles. There they were approached at once by Charles de Gaulle who greeted Jacques Vendroux and asked his permission to dance with his sister. He never let her go till the end of the ball. After the sixth waltz Yvonne told her brother: "Captain de Gaulle has just proposed to me. I accepted him." In a few days, their engagement was announced. Everything happened very swiftly, with no time for courtship. Despite that, or perhaps because of that, the marriage was a success; Yvonne would be Charles de Gaulle's true friend to the end of his days, and there would be no rifts between them.

According to custom, the young couple were married six months later at the old church Notre-Dame-de-Calais, embellished with the statues of Charles the Great and St. Louis. History always kept an eye on de Gaulle. The wedding dinner was held at the Vendroux house. The newlyweds settled in Paris, in the Place Saint-François-Xavier, on the left bank of the Seine, next to the Hôtel des Invalides. The summer seasons they spent at the castle of Yvonne's parents in the Ardennes, until they bought a house of their own at the village of Colombey les-Deux-Eglises. Thus de Gaulle's personal ties with the industrial bourgeoisie of the north were further strengthened. Let us recall that his grandfather and father had married women from the same social and provincial milieu. Everything in de Gaulle's life was linked with the north; the north always had an attraction for him; recall that he had himself chosen to be posted to Arras. It was a land of endless plains where life was hard. Throughout his life he would identify all of France with the north, involuntarily transferring the features, customs and traditions of this cloudy land to all Frenchmen, although the inhabitants of Marseilles or Gascony, to take but two examples, are quite different in character.

After his final return from Poland de Gaulle was appointed, on October 1, 1921, associate professor of military history at Saint-Cyr. He now faced, in fact, a new field of action; for his talks to the fellow prisoners-of-war at Ingolstadt and even classes with the

Polish officers, conducted through an interpreter, had been experiences of a rather different kind. He had a splendid knowledge of his subject, military history. But that was not enough to win the attention and trust of his pupils. His enormous and somewhat ungainly figure, swinging gestures, an unusual guttural voice—all of this could stand in the way of his contact with the students. The strange and unusual traits of the teacher's appearance and manners often become targets for the pupils' jibes, all the more so that that seemingly composed gentleman delivered his lectures at an extremely emotional pitch. He literally became ecstatic, and that is most dangerous for a teacher, for the slightest loss of the sense of proportion will immediately produce an ironical reaction. Only a really fine orator can risk high pathos, and Charles de Gaulle proved to be precisely that kind of orator.

Here is a characteristic moment in one of Captain de Gaulle's lectures, as recorded by his pupil Lecoq. He spoke of the 1870 war, an ill-fated one for France, and in particular of the battle of Froeschwiller. Because of the stupidity of the generals, who were completely at sea as to the movements of their own troops, 35,000 Frenchmen fought here against 135,000 Germans. French soldiers fought staunchly and courageously, but they were routed. De Gaulle thus finished his account of this tragic episode in French military history: "Then, gentlemen, Marshal Mac Mahon went weeping among his soldiers. Suddenly an old sergeant of the rifles asked him: 'But, my Marshal, sir, did we ever refuse to die?'" Here de Gaulle hit the desk with his right fist and spoke in a ringing voice: "No, gentlemen, they did not refuse to die! Stand up, gentlemen, to salute the men who were crushed by a misfortune but did not lack either valour or courage!"

The students listened to him with bated breath, their faces growing pale or red, and the eyes of some brimming with tears. The unusual harsh sentimentality and even bombast seemed natural coming from his mouth and produced a somewhat hypnotic effect on his listeners. In this case, as always, he ascribed greater nobility to history than history itself warranted. But it may well be that only in this shape can history play its great role of *magistra vitae*.

Generally speaking, encomiums for the French army were not exactly in the spirit of the times. Of course, a victory in a great war had been won, the army shone at reviews and numerous ceremonial unveilings of memorials to the dead. On November 11, 1920, the remains of the Unknown Soldier who fell at Verdun were interred with great solemnity under the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile, and an eternal flame was kindled. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier became an altar, as it were, of French patriotism. Many thought, with good enough reason that that soldier could hardly have belonged to the regular army headed by the reactionary

militarist caste that failed so disgracefully at the very beginning of the war. The reservists, that is, the people's masses that joined the army through mobilisation, had decided the outcome of the war. "Civilians won the war," said a deputy in parliament. That is why the regular army, despite the recent victory, did not enjoy too high a prestige. Besides, there was no danger of war in the near future. The Treaty of Versailles imposed strict limitations, as it then appeared, on the strength and armaments of the German army. That is why parliament voted in 1922 to reduce the term of national service from three years to 18 months. The whole army seemed to go into a decline. There was a marked change for the worse in the officers' financial position. By 1925, prices in France rose 4.5 times compared to the prewar level due to inflation, while officers' pay increased but insignificantly.

Still, Charles de Gaulle could not conceive of any career for himself other than the military one. Teaching military history at Saint-Cyr, he simultaneously prepared for competitive examinations at l'Ecole Supérieure de Guerre, the French equivalent for General Staff academies in other countries. In November 1922 he began to attend that academy, which had a two-year curriculum.

Classes here differed essentially from those of Saint-Cyr. L'Ecole de Guerre trained potential generals capable of heading staffs and commanding large formations. Although de Gaulle was again a student, the level of study was different. He himself was ten years older; he had gone through war and captivity; he had been wounded. Could it be that this man, whose character had taken final shape, a man already married and encumbered by a family, was falling into the rut of an Army career, forsaking his dreams of feats in the name of France and hopes for his own special mission? On the contrary, an awareness of some vague but indubitably great predestination grew stronger in him. One of his comrades at l'Ecole de Guerre, the future General Chauvin, once said to de Gaulle: "I have a curious feeling that you are pledged to a great destiny..."

Anyone else would have responded to this with a joke or just laughter. But de Gaulle replied, slowly and with emphasis: "Yes, I think so too..."

An interesting portrait of de Gaulle at the time is drawn in the book *The Infantryman from Gascony* (*Fantassin de Gascogne*) by another fellow student at the academy, Captain (later General) André Laffargue. He writes of a lack of any equilibrium in de Gaulle, his contempt for the real situation, and his infinite obstinacy: "He walked very straight, with a swagger, as if he were moving his own statue."

But, however unusual such behaviour might be, he had a dignity, a sense of proportion and tact, which inspired respect even in those who did not quite like him. The same Laffargue, who criti-

cised Charles de Gaulle a great deal, had to admit: "Being much taller than ourselves, he did not seem haughty and domineering. More reticent and less expansive, of course, than most of us, he was always with us, participating in everything and putting in a word often with originality and humour."

On one occasion l'Ecole de Guerre was visited by several officers from Spain. A party was given in their honour, with a funny parody of a corrida, this national pastime of the Spanish, as one of the entertainments. The French students of the school played bull-fighters, bulls, horses and horsemen in the great hall where Mass was usually said. Laffargue wrote: "De Gaulle moved through this commotion like a great silent ghost, taking no part in the playing out of the corrida but missing no detail. At one moment, as I galloped holding the legs of Welschinger, I passed by de Gaulle and heard him say, in his guttural voice: 'In any association of two men, there is always one that makes the other carry him.'" De Gaulle's sharp wit, his humour with a shade of contempt for men would always be his distinctive feature.

Of course, the jolly scenes like the "corrida" just described, were no evidence at all of any spirit of democracy at l'Ecole de Guerre. On the contrary, a conservative atmosphere prevailed here of caste loyalty to the most archaic and largely monarchist traditions of the French officer corps. The changes in the political climate in France after the war, marked by a sharp increase in anti-militarism, a growth in the influence of the Left forces, in no way affected the army or, at any rate, its regular officers. Since vanquished Germany presented no danger, the inner enemy, France's revolutionary forces, became the main enemy in the eyes of the reactionary officers. In 1920, a historical event took place—the French Communist Party came into being, gradually becoming an increasingly significant factor in France's political life. In establishments like l'Ecole de Guerre, such events were observed with suspicion, alarm, and enmity.

Typical of de Gaulle's environment at the time were the figures of his three fellow students, captains like himself, whom he received every week at his home and talked to for hours. These were Georges-Picot, an academician's son, Bridoux, the son of a general, and Loustaunau-Lacau, who would graduate at the top of the class. Their later political fates are of interest, for they reflect the views and attitudes formed in those years of training. In 1940 General Georges-Picot would refuse to join de Gaulle, preferring to serve the Vichy government. Bridoux would be the Minister for War in it, and he would be sentenced to death for treason in 1945, when de Gaulle would head the government. Loustaunau-Lacau would also serve Vichy, though not for long.

Since we speak of Vichy here, it should be mentioned that at that time de Gaulle was close to Marshal Pétain. The Marshal invited him to his house and had long talks with the officer for whom he had great hopes, considering him to be exceptionally capable. In December 1921 Charles de Gaulle's son was born, and was named Philippe after the Marshal. On this occasion Pétain gave de Gaulle his portrait on the back of which he wrote that he wished that little Philippe should inherit his father's brilliance.

And yet, although in those years Charles de Gaulle spoke the same language as men like Georges-Picot, Bridoux or Loustaunau-Lacau, a certain barrier separated him from them already at that time; it was apparently due not so much to a difference of convictions as that of character. The fact is that de Gaulle, undoubtedly conservative in his political views, was not a conformist. It was during his training at l'Ecole de Guerre that this desire to speak and act in accordance with his convictions showed itself quite clearly for the first time. One may perhaps call it following his principles, and it cost de Gaulle a great deal. Because of it, he would remain a captain for 12 years.

A tactical doctrine reigned undisputed at the school, which de Gaulle immediately assessed as dogmatic. Colonel Moyrand, an erudite but extremely pedantic professor who held the chair of tactics, was the main proponent of this dominant and official trend. He zealously preached the so-called *a priori* tactics (i.e., determined beforehand). The doctrine proceeded from the experiences of the 1914-1918 war interpreted in the sense that defensive tactics is the most profitable, that any movement and manoeuvring is very dangerous, and that fire-power decides everything. According to these ideas, one must choose the battlefield beforehand, create a superiority of fire-power there, and wait until the enemy should fall into the fire trap. The principles of action worked out beforehand must not be altered under any circumstances. De Gaulle believed this mode of action deadly dangerous, opposing to it the tactical theory of action depending on the circumstances that cannot be foreseen beforehand. He reasoned fully in accordance with the theories of his spiritual guide Henri Bergson—as he understood the latter, of course.

During the first year at the school de Gaulle was cautious, though he sometimes asked unexpected questions that nonplussed his professors, showing their limitations. But he did not openly attack the official doctrine, for "fear of excommunication", as he said with a laugh. But in the end that moment of truth came. The school ended with field exercises where the graduates had to display their tactical skill while commanding real army units. On June 17, 1924, during the manoeuvres in Lorraine, close to Bar-sur-Aube, de Gaulle was entrusted with the command of an army corps

of the "blues". He resolutely began to act in open defiance to Colonel Moyrand's rules. His unexpected decisions and unusual moves enraged this pedant, who tried in vain to show the presumptuous captain his place. For example, they had this dialogue, extremely typical of de Gaulle. Colonel Moyrand suddenly asked de Gaulle: "Where, then, was the baggage train of the left-hand regiment of your right-hand division?" Scarcely turning his head, de Gaulle said to his Chief of Staff: "Châteauvieux, please be good enough to answer." The Colonel was furious: "But it is you that I ask, de Gaulle." De Gaulle's reply was essentially reasonable but extremely impudent: "Colonel, you gave me the responsibilities of an army commander. If I had also assumed those of my subordinates, I should not have been able adequately to fulfil my mission."

Colonel Moyrand, who believed it was better to lose a battle than to break the rules, was ready to tear his hair seeing the unexpected, original, and bold moves of the Captain who contemptuously threw aside everything that the Colonel had taught him. Moyrand cried that it was blasphemy. To this, de Gaulle answered: "But I have won."

Many said that it would have been better for him to have lost the battle, for Moyrand would do his best to damage his career. His characteristic of de Gaulle was as follows: "A very intelligent officer, cultivated and serious; has brilliance and facility; greatly gifted; much stuff in him. Unfortunately spoils his incontestable qualities by his excessive assurance, his severity towards the opinion of others and his attitude of being a King in Exile..."

As a result, de Gaulle was not given a General Staff appointment, as was the rule with the best graduates, but was sent to the headquarters of the Rhine occupation army at Mainz. De Gaulle was gloomy during the farewell ceremony for the graduates, reflecting on the pettiness and vengefulness of Moyrand and the other luminaries of that school. Chauvin, a comrade of his, said of the characteristic given de Gaulle: "You have planted enough banderillas in their skins to have deserved this death sentence..." To this, de Gaulle answered in fury: "I did not enter this dirty hole only to become a major!"

Now he was back in Germany, this time not as a prisoner-of-war but as an officer of the occupation army. However, just as in the beginning of the war, he again felt humiliated, ashamed for France and her army, though it was peace time now. The fact was that in January 1923, Poincaré's government ordered five French and two Belgian divisions into the Ruhr area because of a delay in the delivery of reparations Germany owed to France according to the Treaty of Versailles. The immediate goal of this sensational operation was to make Germany pay up punctually. But the main

thing was that French big business and its political representatives cherished the hope of controlling the mines and factories of the Ruhr, a source of incalculable profit. But this design had too much of greed about it and too little political realism. The allies of yesterday, the U.S.A. and Great Britain, supported Germany and not France, for they viewed Germany as their main line of defence against Bolshevism. Eventually, France received even less in reparations than before, and had to withdraw her troops. The humiliating end to the Ruhr adventure evoked the bitterest of feelings in de Gaulle. Because of the withdrawal of the French troops, he spent only three months in Germany. In any case, he was again given a first-hand opportunity to see Germany, and he could not fail to observe a growth of chauvinism and nearly open preparations for taking revenge there. Germany always evoked grave thoughts, doubts and misgivings in de Gaulle. It was in 1924 that de Gaulle's first book was published; its subject was Germany: *Discord among the Enemy*.

The idea of that book had been conceived a long time before, when he was a prisoner-of-war yet, making notes from German newspapers at Ingolstadt. All the subsequent years he had pondered on the book and wrote it bit by bit, but mainly he had tried to decide whether it was appropriate to offer the book to the public. After all, it was in open contravention to the traditions of the French army. An officer, and a junior officer at that, could not submit military problems for discussion by civilians who could not make head or tail of them anyway. That was the generally accepted view, and it reflected the spirit of caste exclusiveness of the officer corps. But in what other way could de Gaulle break loose from the obscurity when he occupied so extremely modest and humiliating a position as he did? In what other way could he personally affect the course of events? De Gaulle had no special hopes for moving up the service ladder. What was left him was journalism, which was looked at askance in the army.

Speaking out in public was definitely risky if one's concern was a normal, smooth career. But de Gaulle was not attracted to and could not be satisfied by an ordinary career. Everything or nothing—that was his principle, as far as position in life went. He therefore chose conscious risk.

It is said that one can achieve a great deal through journalism, if one drops journalism before it is too late. But that holds good for professional journalism. It is a different matter when the press is an additional means for implementing some idea in life. Here, journalism can indeed help to achieve a great deal, if one perseveres at it and propagates one's ideas patiently. That is precisely what de Gaulle would do. His literary activity would become an inalienable

and extremely important part of his career, although it would remain unnoticed for many years. Indeed, for a long time de Gaulle's dialogue with the public would be rather in the nature of a monologue, or, to be more precise, a voice crying in the wilderness. That is particularly true of his first book, of which only a thousand copies were sold and which evoked almost no response from the press. It is nevertheless one of his most remarkable books, particularly significant for de Gaulle's spiritual evolution.

The five chapters of the book *Discord among the Enemy* told the story of the lack of discipline and arbitrariness of General von Kluck, who commanded the German troops which approached Paris in August 1914, playing into the hands of the French and helping them in the battle of the Marne; of Admiral Tirpitz's fierce and successful fight against Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg for declaring an unlimited submarine war, pushing the United States into the war on the side of the Entente. De Gaulle also spoke of the incapability of Germany to create a unified command of the armies of all its allies, despite a real chance of doing so, and of the crisis in the German government in 1917, caused by the intrigues of Ludendorff, who aspired to establish his dictatorship and managed to remove Bethmann-Hollweg from power. In describing the activities of Germany's military leaders—Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Tirpitz, who imposed their decisions on the government at the most critical moments in the war—de Gaulle showed that it was precisely there that the most important cause of Germany's defeat lay.

But *Discord among the Enemy* is not simply a historical work, particularly as it is open to criticism in that respect. The author does not touch on the most important processes in the social consciousness of the German people, on the causes for the imminent revolutionary explosion, which was by no means a result of the power struggle at the top between the military and civilians but of the war itself, which made the social contradictions more acute. He is hardly concerned with such a factor in the defeat of Germany as the enormous superiority of the Entente countries in manpower and material resources. The book is therefore of limited significance for elucidating the history of Germany's defeat. Its meaning is different: the historical events in Germany were for de Gaulle merely a pretext for setting forth certain ideas and principles that were sheer heresy in the eyes of the French High Command. The latter always admired the organisation and activity of the German General Staff, while de Gaulle completely debunked it, showing the pernicious effects of its activities on Germany's national interest. The book's most important idea was that even during a war, and perhaps particularly during a war, the military powers must be subordinated to the civilian ones, to the state, that only the civilian authorities,

rather than the army commanders, can express and formulate the national interest, military policy and strategy. It showed the extreme danger of the pressure of the military on the state, since they subordinate everything to operational necessity, whereas military operations, their methods and goals must proceed from the more general and broad views of the political authority.

All of these ideas decidedly contradicted the views and deeds of French military leaders, who had fought for decades to transform the army into something outside state control. They rejected all attempts of the Republican authorities to influence the army. Moreover, the army aspired to a position above the state. That was what had happened at the beginning of the war. Parliament, the government, the police, the intelligence, the judiciary—everything was subordinated to the General Staff headed by General Joffre. This dictatorship of the military was overthrown in December 1916 only after a bitter struggle and an acute crisis. But later, too, the military command continually fought for supremacy, which was reflected, e.g., in the conflicts between Foch and Clemenceau.

True, de Gaulle's book was about Germany. But it was exactly the case when, according to the German proverb, one beats the sack for the ass to feel it. De Gaulle himself, addressing the French reader, spoke rather transparently of the universal significance of the conclusions which he drew from the German experience. De Gaulle's book was the beginning of his struggle against the views of the top brass. Proceeding from the principles expressed in that book, de Gaulle would later launch an active campaign for reforming the French army.

The book also expressed some other of de Gaulle's ideas, in particular those that were the basis of his differences with Colonel Moyrand. He rejected the dogmatism, sluggishness, and routine in military tactics, stressing the importance of empiricism, intuitions, and intellectual flexibility. He stated somewhere in the opening pages: "In war, except for some principles, there is no universal system, but only circumstances and personalities."

All of this does not at all mean that de Gaulle's first book was iconoclastic or revolutionary in character. It was absolutely loyal opposition aimed at consolidating the French state as a whole. De Gaulle merely attempted to overcome the narrow-mindedness of the top military, their caste limitations, in the name of the interests of the bourgeois state, of which he had a clearer conception.

In the meantime, in July 1925, de Gaulle is posted to the office of Marshal Pétain, Vice-President of the Supreme Council of National Defence (*le Conseil supérieur de la guerre*) and actual head of the French army, for that council was chaired by the President of

the Republic himself. So de Gaulle moves to 4B, Boulevard des Invalides. Now the light in the room where he works goes out only when the rest of the building is in the darkness.

The Marshal had not forgotten his former junior lieutenant who had served under him at Arras. Pétain had expressed his astonishment and indignation that so capable an officer should have received so insignificant a post after graduating from l'Ecole de Guerre. He had called it a monstrous mistake and decided to correct it using his high position. He had also heard of the conflict between Captain de Gaulle and Colonel Moyrand. "De Gaulle is right," Pétain had said then. One would have thought that this opened the way for a brilliant career for de Gaulle, at last. But things were not so simple, however. Complications began as soon as de Gaulle was entrusted with making a report on the role of fortresses and other fortifications in defending France's borders.

That task was part of the study programme intended to substantiate the construction of fortifications on France's northern and eastern borders. That plan had been discussed in the military and governmental circles since 1920. The way the adherents of that plan reasoned was something like this: the war had shown the advantages of defensive tactics; after the return of Alsace and Lorraine, France did not intend to extend her territory, all she needed was reliable means of defence, and that was why it was necessary to build an impregnable fortification line that would guarantee its safety for all time. This kind of reasoning completely ignored such elementary things as the rapid development of military technology. It was not considered, either, that in creating a defence line, France let the adversary know in advance the methods she would use in the future war, enabling him to prepare counter-measures beforehand. The whole scheme was a result of the stagnation, routine and obsolescence of the thinking of France's military circles. However that may be, parliament, after lengthy debate, passed a law envisaging the construction of a stupendous fortification system costing 3.5 thousand million francs, which went down in history as the Maginot Line. Naturally, it became the basis of the entire strategy of the French General Staff. It is easy to see that the Maginot Line idea fully accorded with Colonel Moyrand's concepts, so resolutely opposed by de Gaulle. But the difficulty was that Marshal Pétain, de Gaulle's patron, himself favoured the construction of a defensive line! The Captain found himself in an extremely unpleasant position, for he would have to prove the correctness of ideas which he himself rejected outright.

It took de Gaulle a month to carry out the task, and in December 1925 *La Revue militaire française* published his article "The Historical Role of French Fortifications" (*Rôle historique des places fortes françaises*). Starting with the historical and geographical

aspects of the problem, de Gaulle expounded his views on the question of French security that sharply differed in tone from the complacency with which France's official representatives spoke of the inviolable peace ensured, as they thought, by the League of Nations and the policy of appeasement of Germany.

"In the course of the recent war," wrote de Gaulle, "France, despite exceptional military preparations and a unitedness of the nation unprecedented in her history, saw her frontiers in the north and east violated, a fact that proved their weakness, and heard the guns of the enemy near the walls of the capital eight days after the first battles.

"Her victory is not enough to dispel the undercurrent of disquiet which her future inspires in her. Despite the momentary weakness of her principal enemy, the temporary defence on the Rhine, the return of Metz and Strasbourg, the alliance with Belgium, the good will of Luxembourg, and the founding and development of a great international institution, France retains too cruel and deep a memory of the frequent invasions from which it suffered, to forget the disadvantages of her frontiers and neglect to take them into account.

"This cruel weakness of our frontiers is, however, a peculiar feature of our country. Nature protects better England, Germany, Italy, Spain, or Russia. This disadvantage, absolute and relative, of France has always absorbed the attention of her governments, who have sought to compensate for that, depending on the epoch, the circumstances or the doctrines, through expansion, alliances, international agreements, or fortifications. After her recent trials, France has renounced expansion, she has concluded certain alliances, and searches to develop certain international institutions. But must she fortify her frontiers?"

In accordance with his superiors' views, de Gaulle answered that question in the affirmative. But this concession is hedged with reservations that obviously run counter to the official line. He asserted that the whole of the French military doctrine should not be built on employing a strong line of defence works alone, for that would doom the army to passivity from the outset. Mapping out the fortification lines, he intended the strongholds to be merely the bases for the dynamic manoeuvres of the troops. De Gaulle thus suggested a compromise but stuck to his guns in principle. De Gaulle's rather unorthodox article caused a lot of debate in the atmosphere of servility surrounding the Marshal's person. De Gaulle realised that he must have acted rashly in linking up the question of defence lines with general military doctrine. It became clear to him that the Marshal's patronage had some negative aspects, too, limiting as it did his independence. It became more and more difficult for him to act in accordance with Pétain's views, for the man who had

once criticised the stagnation in official strategy was now 70 and himself a defender of outdated notions of the nature of the future war. Later de Gaulle would say that the marshal was "dead in 1925".

However, the relations between de Gaulle and Pétain remained outwardly the same, and the Marshal was still de Gaulle's patron. De Gaulle refrained from any demonstrative exposition of his personal views of problems in strategy and tactics. The fact that de Gaulle was completely absorbed in his work helped a great deal. On Pétain's advice, he started a study in the history of the French army. At the end of 1926, he was at last due for promotion: he was included in the list of officers to be promoted to major and the position of a battalion commander. Major Lucien Nachin, who in those years became de Gaulle's constant companion, congratulated him. De Gaulle wrote in reply: "It is pleasant to be promoted, but the question is, however, that one must distinguish oneself."

Soon, Marshal Pétain gave him an opportunity of distinguishing himself. He instructed de Gaulle to deliver three lectures at l'Ecole de Guerre on the role and qualities of the military leader. The vain old man hoped that his subordinate would draw a portrait of the Marshal himself, the "victor of Verdun". That was what happened indeed, to some extent, although de Gaulle did not stoop to open flattery. A talk at l'Ecole de Guerre, where Colonel Moyrand had recently damaged his career, could be regarded as a kind of revenge. The graduates of two years and the entire staff of the school were present at the lecture. Moreover, Pétain personally introduced de Gaulle in expressions that astounded a great many: "Gentlemen, listen to Captain de Gaulle... Listen to him with attention, for the hour will come when grateful France will appeal to him..."

But the effect of the lectures proved doubtful. The pathos and the pomposity, unusual and unexpected in that audience, antagonised the latter. This attitude was enhanced by the jealousy and ill-will caused by the obvious fact that this obscure but extremely self-assured captain was the protégé of Marshal Pétain, the first person in the army. True, the result was quite different when de Gaulle repeated his lectures at the Sorbonne before a civilian and thus more intelligent audience. Here the listeners were much warmer to the speaker, who impressed them as a cultured, original, and boldly thinking person presenting his ideas with great temperament. In any case, these lectures played their role; they became the impulse for de Gaulle's book which appeared several years later under the somewhat intriguing title *The Edge of the Sword (Fil de l'épée)*.

In 1927 de Gaulle won his fourth stripe: he was now a major. He was appointed commander of the 19th motorised infantry bat-

lion forming part of the French troops occupying the Rhine province in Germany. The battalion was stationed at the ancient city of Trier, which was at one time the centre of Roman operations on the Rhine. Since only the crack troops are shown to foreigners (particularly Germans), de Gaulle's battalion was one of the best units in the French army.

On inspecting the battalion, Major de Gaulle found it an "excellent unit". He liked the junior officers who got their military education after the war already and were therefore not infected with hatred of war characteristic of many who had had personal experience of it. True, he did not quite like some of the officers that were too cultured, in his view. It is interesting that, although he was an officer and intellectual himself, he preferred subordinates without a bend for abstract reasoning, for the educated ones, in his view, were liable to be pretentiously helpless. In this connection, he wrote to Lucien Nachin: "Mars was strong, handsome and brave, but he had little intelligence."

De Gaulle was severe and even cruel towards himself, so he thought he had a right to be exacting towards others. A punctilious and energetic commander, entirely engrossed in his battalion, he wanted to bring it to the point of perfection. But he also took care of his men. The winter of 1927 was very severe on the Moselle; the famous vineyards were damaged by the frosts, and an epidemic of the grippe broke out among the French troops. More than 30 soldiers died at Trier. Reports of that reached Paris, and one of those who resented the strenuous pace of combat training at the 19th battalion sent a complaint to parliament. As a result, Trier was visited by a high parliamentary commission including quite a few prominent politicians (some of the members, like Herriot, Daladier, Gouin, Ramadier, headed the government at various periods). The commission could see for itself that the 19th battalion was a model unit, and reported its findings to the deputies. The speaker for the commission recounted an interesting episode. At the height of the epidemic a soldier named Gouraud died who had no relatives at all, neither mother nor father. Major de Gaulle, commanding the battalion, decided to wear a sign of mourning for the dead soldier himself.

The Chamber of Deputies broke into loud applause on hearing that story, and Prime Minister Poincaré was heard to make a very complimentary remark from the government bench. Incidentally, throughout his life de Gaulle came into direct contact with the people only in the army. The image he had of the people was that of a soldier of whom complete obedience is required and who therefore deserves attention and respect. De Gaulle would retain this psychological attitude, developed through life experiences, to all Frenchmen, not only to soldiers.

De Gaulle's enthusiasm caused by the new appointment did not last long. He could not, of course, be content with his activity as a battalion commander, however model the unit might be. His spiritual concern was for the whole of France. It would appear that one could have no anxiety about her destiny, for, with rare exceptions, French politicians spoke of little else than "the divine flower, peace", as Edouard Herriot put it. But, very soon after these beautiful words were said, Field Marshal Hindenburg became Germany's president, and he was not a man to enjoy the scent of the "divine flower".

In October 1925 the Locarno agreements were signed, which guaranteed Germany's western frontiers but at the same time eliminated the difference between the victors and the vanquished. Aristide Briand, France's eloquent Foreign Minister, was declared to be "the father of peace". Léger, the head of his office, said: "France has at last achieved security on the Rhine! ... No more war." But von Schubert, the Wilhelmstraße State Secretary, would soon say: "Germany intends to reconquer Alsace and Lorraine and to prepare for revenge, as soon as she is able to do that."

In September 1926, Germany is admitted to the League of Nations. Briand is full of enthusiasm. And at the same time Stresemann says: "Germany's rehabilitation before the entire world is an accomplished fact... It has been proved that it is the Allies who are responsible for the war." Around that time Briand secretly meets Stresemann at Thoiry and reaches an agreement, during a dinner, on full reconciliation between France and Germany and eternal friendship between them. Germany, in its turn, demands evacuation of French forces from the Rhine province.

On August 27, 1928, the Briand-Kellogg Pact is signed. War is renounced. Briand is triumphant. The newspapers run these headlines describing the ceremony of signing: "Celebration of a Spiritual Wedding between Briand and Peace!" A year later, Briand puts forward his Pan-Europe plan as a reliable means of excluding the possibility of war. And in Germany, storm troopers begin to march through the streets, swastikas on their shirt-sleeves. Young Hitler strives for power. The Ruhr magnates are looking for a "strong man"; they are no longer satisfied with secret rearmament. De Gaulle sees with his own eyes the rapid growth of chauvinism and revanchism in Germany. He therefore readily subscribes to the view of André Tardieu who stated in the Chamber of Deputies: "Your policy, M. Briand, is that of 'a dead dog floating with the current'!"

De Gaulle in no way shares the rosy views of those who are lulled by Briand's sweet talk about eternal peace. Blissful optimism about accord and reconciliation with Germany makes him angry and indignant. He sees the future in a gloomy light. In 1928, he

writes in one of his letters to Lucien Nachin:

"The force of events breaks down all the barriers still existing in Europe, generally accepted and precious. One must see that Anschluß is near, then Germany will get back, in one way or another, everything that was taken from her and given to Poland. After that, we shall be required to give up Alsace. This appears to me to be written in the sky."

He watches with growing indignation the top brass, complacently believing themselves the engineers of the 1918 victory, jealously guard their experiences and their methods, interfering with any new ideas. They hope that in the future war the French army will be able to take refuge behind the fortifications, on which enormous sums are spent while mere pennies are left for new-type technical equipment for the army. True, many years later de Gaulle would write of this time: "I found in the soldier's trade the powerful interest it has to offer to the mind and to the heart. In the Army, though a mill without grist, I saw the instrument of the great actions which were approaching."

It looks as if time had erased a great deal from his memory, for there is no trace of "interest" in his letter to Lucien Nachin dated June 20, 1929: "Ah, how bitter to pull at the harness these days. But one must. In a few years, they will be catching at our coat-tails to save our country ... and ruffraff above all."

At that time, de Gaulle was struck by a misfortune in his private life. On January 1, 1928, his second daughter was born, whom they called Anne. It soon became clear that the child suffered from a congenital disease resulting in mental backwardness. Of his three children, however, de Gaulle loved Anne, who only lived to be 20, most of all, and most poignantly. Yvonne de Gaulle wrote to a friend: "Charles and me would give everything, everything, health, fortune, success, career, if only Anne could be a little girl like others." De Gaulle concealed his grief under an icy mask of composure...

Late in 1929, de Gaulle was sent, at his request, to the headquarters of the French troops in Syria and Lebanon. After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, France was given the League of Nations mandate to administer these countries. The strength of the French forces in the Middle East sometimes reached 100,000 for here was one of the main areas affected by the national-liberation movement of the peoples of the French colonial empire. Two years before de Gaulle's arrival at Beirut, the French had great trouble suppressing a national uprising of the Syrian people. Here de Gaulle saw for the first time the methods of French colonial policy in action, combining ruthless repression and forced political concessions. The sojourn in the East did not bring about any considerable changes in de Gaulle's life, but he could see a great deal and acquire

knowledge that would come in very handy in the future. De Gaulle visited Cairo, Bagdad, Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem. Everywhere he observed with curiosity the exotic conditions in the East; he was quick to understand that the hopes for retaining French supremacy there were impracticable. After six months in the Levant he wrote to Lucien Nachin: "It's ten years since we have been here. My impression is that we have hardly penetrated the country and that the people are just as alien to us (and we to them) as always. It is true that we have adopted the worst system of action in this country, namely, that of inciting the people to rise by themselves ... whereas nothing has ever been achieved here, neither the canals of the Nile nor the aqueducts of *Palmira* nor the Roman roads nor the olive groves, without coercion. In my view, our destiny will be either to accept that, or to leave the country..."

It is obvious that Charles de Gaulle assessed France's chances in the Orient quite soberly and shrewdly.

THE SWORD

"But all is well, Milady Montmorency!" The song with this refrain became most popular in France at the time when de Gaulle observed the world in gloomy solitude, seeing everywhere the stamp of decay. He was indeed lonely in his pessimism, for in the years between 1926 and 1930 the French bourgeoisie was euphoric. After many years of catastrophic inflation, the franc became one of the most reliable currencies, owing to Poincaré's reforms. The new industrial capital rose to replace the old usurious capital that had been battered a great deal in the tribulations of the war. Between 1920 and 1929, production rose by 31 per cent in France, whereas in the rest of Europe it grew by only 18 per cent.

France's hegemony in Europe, ensured by the Treaty of Versailles, appeared unshakeable. Briand diffused pacifist dreams with his promises of endless peace. True, the chorus of carefree voices was sometimes interrupted by the menacing growls of Nazism rising in Germany. But Germany was supposed to go to war against Bolsheviks in the east! Had not been the Locarno Treaty signed, which guaranteed only the western borders of Germany? The song they sang in the cabarets of Montmartre was, "Locarno... Locarno... All is fine!" When a certain *chansonnier* changed the last words to "All in vain!", he got catcalls. What sort of war could there be when even the metallurgical firms of different countries merged? 1926 saw the emergence of the Steel Cartel of France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg, symbolising, as it were, the beginning of the end of international economic competition. And then there was Pan-Europe, intended to make a friendly family of the European agglomeration of peoples, as Briand insisted.

No, all was well, really well! "All Paris" indulged in pleasure every night, without a care. Restaurants flourished. The young bourgeois were crazy about the new American dances that took Europe by storm to the sounds of jazz that stirred the blood in their veins. Few guessed that they were dancing on top of a volcano, whose dread let itself felt more and more often. It was not surprising, for "prosperity" had grown on the soil of unprecedented intense exploitation of the working class, which now realised more and more clearly its position, as the young French Communist

Party became increasingly active. During the parliamentary elections in April 1928, the Communists gained more than a million votes, that is, 200,000 more than at the previous elections.

In the autumn of 1929, the reports about the Black Friday in Wall Street came like a bolt from the blue. That was the start of the great economic world crisis. For more than a year, however, France felt herself to be a "happy island". She held out longer than others owing to extensive inner markets and the stabilisation of the franc, which made exports easier. Alas, her turn also came in the spring of 1930. Annual production in France fell by 33 per cent, and mass unemployment ensued. In all, 30 million people became unemployed in the "prosperous" capitalist world, while production fell by 40 per cent. That was an unprecedented catastrophe, the more dramatic for the bourgeoisie that it came at the height of euphoria.

De Gaulle saw, with gloomy satisfaction, his prophecies about the instability of the modern world come true. Naturally he completely ignored the fact that the crisis fully confirmed the ineradicable contradictions of capitalism, as he considered the crisis from his usual basic positions, insisting that history was dominated by the national element predetermining the organic inevitability of the eternal confrontation of nations and periodic bloody conflicts between them. He believed that all states involved in the crisis would seek a solution of their difficulties through external expansion at the expense of other countries. They would erect protectionist barriers of economic nationalism, turning markets into economic battlefields. Stronger nations would strive to push their burden on the weaker ones. The crisis was merely a current phase in the war of all against all, in which only the strong and ruthless would survive. Economic nationalism was merely a prelude to political nationalism, and that could only lead to war.

War was the constant theme of de Gaulle's thinking. In those gloomy years of setbacks and failures, surrounded by a wall of incomprehension, he led a second life, as it were, finding means of self-expression in contemplations on war and in literary activity. True, his first book *Discord among the Enemy* was promptly forgotten, while a dozen of his articles evoked nearly no response at all. But bitter reversals did not discourage de Gaulle. His character of a strong self-assured man helped him to persevere at his cause, even though he did not meet with any signs of attention or understanding on the part of society which did not wish its complacency disturbed by gloomy and menacing prophecies of an inevitable war.

In 1932, Berger-Levrault, de Gaulle's fellow prisoner-of-war at Ingolstadt, who had become a publisher of military literature, produced his new book *The Edge of the Sword*. The message of this book is rather vague, just as its eye-catching title. Its style is quite

pretentious, while in content it is a kind of compilation of ideas that are at times pretty old. The invariable element is the influence of the oracles of his youth, though Péguy fell in battle as early as 1914, while Barrès died in 1923. As for Bergson, de Gaulle directly refers to and quotes him here. Many passages are reminiscent of Maurras, not only in style but also in the sense of de Gaulle's arguments concerning the role of an outstanding personality. Maurras' idea that "the people need a leader just as badly as man needs bread" will always be near to de Gaulle's heart and mind.

There is about *The Edge of the Sword* the tangible taste of the frankly realistic, if not cynical, political principles of Machiavelli. As for Nietzsche, whom de Gaulle fiercely attacked in *Discord among the Enemy* for the pernicious effect he had on the German military High Command, his influence is clearly traceable here in de Gaulle's treatment of the relations between the leader and the masses. He also obviously draws on Clausewitz's ideas about the qualities of the military leader. Many point out the closeness of de Gaulle's ideas to those of Ardant Du Picq, a French military theoretician of the past century who wrote of the role of the "moral forces" in war. There are also echoes of Alfred de Vigny, the romantic whose theme was the sad and honourable craft of soldiering.

References to all these ideological forerunners of de Gaulle do not at all make this book unoriginal, for it poses the questions of war, the army and the army leader at a concrete moment and in specific form. On the whole, however, it would be wrong to see it as a scientific treatment of the problems raised there; for instance, de Gaulle sees the basic cause of war in human nature.

Still, the book *The Edge of the Sword* is of exceptional significance for the problem of the evolution of Charles de Gaulle's personality, which is our prime concern. It is a striking autobiographical document, though the author apparently did not regard it as such at all. The book was hardly noticed by anyone, but many years later it was looked upon in quite a different way owing to its author's great career.

De Gaulle's book is not a spontaneous response to an event of current interest. It expresses his ideas accumulated during many years, as indicated by its very structure. The first three chapters, "On Military Activity", "On Character", "On Prestige", are revised texts of lectures delivered in 1927 at l'Ecole de Guerre and at Sorbonne. The chapter "On the Doctrine" was based on an article which he published as early as 1925 under the title "The 'A Priori' Doctrine or the Doctrine of Circumstances". The Introduction and the fifth and last chapter, "Politics and the Soldier", were written by de Gaulle from scratch especially for this book.

Although the book presented a sharp dissonance to the main directions of bourgeois political thinking at the time of prosperity

and feeling of general well-being, that does not at all mean that de Gaulle ignored the political realities. On the contrary, he continually bears them in mind, giving full vent to the feeling of bitterness reflecting his personal dissatisfaction with his destiny and the realisation of the injustice of the French army's humble position in general during the era of Briand's pacifism. He covertly enters into polemics with the apologists of international "stability" at the time.

"Uncertainty," he wrote, "marks our epoch. So many renunciations of conventions, predictions, doctrines, so many trials, losses and deceptions, also so many explosions, shocks, and surprises, have shaken the established order. The military that have just changed the world cannot fail to suffer from this at the beginning and lament their wasted zeal.

"This melancholy of the military corps outside of periods of grand efforts has, no doubt, something classic about it. There is something disappointing about the contrast between the army's fictitious activity at a time of peace and its latent power which the interested parties cannot feel without sadness."

De Gaulle believes it quite understandable that the military and their cares should be shifted into the background at a time when all the peoples aspire for peace. He regards this aspiration as a natural result of the cruel trials of the recent war. But the hope that there will be no war merely because it is dreadful, seems a groundless illusion to him. De Gaulle writes sarcastically of the mystic faith in the impossibility of war, the only source of which is the passionate desire to avoid war. In his opinion, this mystic belief has no logical or substantial foundations at all. Thus he expresses, as it were, an understanding for the naive confidence in the impossibility of war, but only to show its groundlessness. "The sight of a sick man," he writes, "who shakes his fist at death cannot leave anyone insensible."

War cannot be ultimately prevented, because it is a manifestation of the factor of force which is the main content of life, nature, and man himself. Yet this inevitable phenomenon is not only pernicious but at the same time also beneficent. De Gaulle believes that one should speak of this frankly, directly and incisively, for what is in question here is the most dreadful aspect of mankind's life—war as a consequence of the objectively necessary content of life which is inconceivable without violence.

"In fact, can one conceive life without force? If one prevents birth, sterilises the spirit, freezes the souls, lulls to sleep the needs, then force would without doubt disappear from the immobile world. Without it, nothing will prevent it from being indispensable. A means of thought, an instrument of action, a condition of movement, one must have this midwife for progress to be born. It is the shield of masters, the rampart of thrones, the ram of the revolu-

tions; we owe order and liberty, in their turn, to force. Force is the cradle of cities, the sceptre of empires, and the grave-digger of decadence; it makes the laws of peoples and rules their destiny."

De Gaulle needed this defence of force to prove the necessity of the existence of armies, once he has shown the inevitability and beneficence of war. Moreover, he endeavours to convince the reader that, inasmuch as life in any form is inconceivable without force, the progress of human society is impossible without armies. He knows and takes into consideration the anti-militarist attitudes and the accusations levelled against armies. To refute these arguments and to prove the need for and, moreover, the progressive role of the military craft, he purports to be objective. He even concurs with all the accusations brought against armed forces, or makes a show of doing so, and himself repeats them. But his only purpose in doing that is to show their meaninglessness. He no longer regards arms as an inevitable evil, but as the decisive force of the development of world civilisation. De Gaulle thus obviously justifies militarism.

"Armed forces," he writes, "have always been the instruments of barbarity... They stir up at the bottom of hearts the mud of the worst instincts. They proclaim murder, nourish hatred, unleash cupidity. They have destroyed the weak, exalted the unworthy, and supported tyranny. We owe to their blind fury the setbacks to the best projects and checks on the most generous movements. Relentlessly, they destroy order, pillage hopes, kill prophets. However, if Lucifer uses them that way, they have been seen in the hands of the Archangel. With what virtues have they enriched the moral capital of men! Owing to them, courage, devotion, and grandeur of the soul have attained the highest peaks... Carrying ideas, starting reforms, blazing the path for religions, they spread throughout the universe everything that renovated it, made it better, or consoled it. There would have been no Hellenism, no Roman order, no Christianity, no rights of man or modern civilisation without their bloody efforts."

These broad abstractions blot out the differences between just and unjust wars, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary armies, aggressive and defensive armies. The army becomes a symbol, a pure idea which naturally serves to rehabilitate any kind of militarism, the responsibility for its crimes falling on the whole of mankind inasmuch as it exists. "Shameful and magnificent, their history is the history of mankind," writes de Gaulle of armies.

Thus de Gaulle showed the role and place of armies in history, raising their importance to the level of history's main motive force, concluding with the statement that "the sword is the axis of the world". Comparing then this ideal with the actual position of the army in France, de Gaulle calls for a return of the army to a posi-

tion that is worthy of its mission. To achieve this, the army élite, the regular officers, should insist on such a position and, aware of their role, should be proud of belonging to the army—the protector of national grandeur and of the country's security.

"Verily, the military spirit," de Gaulle writes, "the soldiers' art and their virtues are an integral part of the capital of humans. ... It is time that the military élite should recover its consciousness of its preeminent role, that it should concentrate on its object which is, quite simply, war, that it should raise its head and look at the summits. To become the edge of the sword, it is time that it should restore a philosophy that is appropriate to its state."

To work out such a philosophy, it is first of all necessary to understand the essence of war and the principles of waging war. In de Gaulle's opinion, there can be no prescriptions or laws here established once and for all, for in war, just as in life, anything may happen. Here again he develops his military doctrine of circumstances which he had opposed to the official military theories before. The functioning of the army must be directed by leaders that are ready for anything, capable of acting correctly even in entirely inconceivable situations where no military doctrine is applicable and only intuition can be of help. At this point de Gaulle turns to Bergson, raising the military craft to the elevated rank of philosophy and art.

"Bergson ... has shown," writes de Gaulle, "that, to establish a direct contact with the realities, the human spirit must acquire an intuition about them by combining instinct with intelligence..."

"Instinct is ... the faculty that links us most closely with nature. Thanks to it, we plunge most deeply into the order of things... In the matter of cognition, the military leader is the subject of a phenomenon analogous to the one that happens to an artist. The latter cannot fail to use his intelligence. He draws on it for lessons, procedures, and knowledge. But creativity as such is not possible for him except with the aid of an instinctive faculty, inspiration, which alone affords direct contact with nature from which the spark is struck. One can say of the military art the same as Bacon said of the other arts: 'That is man added to nature.'"

There is nothing especially new about the arguments in favour of the prime importance of intuition, instinct, inspiration, insight, talent, genius etc. for a military man, officer or general. It was Napoleon who said that military art is a "child of a goddess and a mortal". De Gaulle merely linked up that idea with Bergson's philosophy—as he understood it, of course. In this way he led the reader to an understanding of the book's main subject: the role of the military leader and the qualities required of him. Quite obviously, inasmuch as intuition is posited as the military leader's most important quality, he must be an extraordinary man endowed by

nature itself with the miraculous gift of all-comprehending instinct, capable of acting under the most formidable circumstances of war. So what qualities must such a man of action have? And here de Gaulle draws a portrait that one cannot fail to recognise: the portrait of none other than himself! "However, strong personalities," he writes, "created for the battle, for trials and great events, do not always present the easy superiority and superficial attractiveness which are so pleasant in the ordinary life. Striking characters are as a rule harsh, unaccommodating, and even implacable. If the mass concedes, rather half-heartedly, their superiority and does them obscure justice, they are rarely loved and therefore rarely favoured. The choice that directs careers more readily falls on those that please than on those who merit it."

These words clearly reflect the indignation of an officer who had for 12 years been held down to the rank of a captain because of the excessive independence of his character and mode of thinking. But he is not discouraged, as the appearance of the book itself shows. He painstakingly depicts the image of a man of action, that very image that, throughout his life, will serve as a model for moulding his own character. In many traits and personality qualities, however, he is already close to his ideal. In short, in *The Edge of the Sword* de Gaulle builds a statue of himself.

Here is the way he describes the man of action, the leader relying on none but himself and the flow of events: "Far from hiding behind the hierarchy, concealing himself among papers, covering himself with reports, ... he embraces action with the pride of a master, for if he takes part in it, it is his; enjoying success provided it is due to him, even if he does not derive any profit from it, bearing the burden of reverses not without a kind of bitter satisfaction. In short, a fighter who finds within himself his ardour and his point of support, a gambler who seeks less gain than success and pays his debts with his own money. The man of character imparts nobility to action; without him, it is the gloomy task of a slave, and thanks to him, it is the divine game of heroes."

The man of action is not afraid of difficulties; they even attract him, "for it is in dealing with them that he realises himself. But it is an affair between himself and the action whether he succeeds or is defeated... Come what may, he searches here for the harsh joy of being responsible."

De Gaulle keeps recurring to the idea that a strong personality is inevitably endowed with qualities that arouse dissatisfaction and incomprehension in everyday life. The superiors are annoyed at his arrogance, and the subordinates, by his pedantic exactingness. "But when the events become grave," de Gaulle continues, "the peril pressing, when the welfare of all suddenly requires initiative, a taste for risk and firmness, the perspective changes immediately and

justice asserts itself. A kind of swell pushes the man of character into the foreground. His advice is taken, his talent praised, and his value utilised. Naturally, to him goes the difficult task, the main effort, the decisive mission. Everything that he proposes is taken into consideration, everything that he demands is accorded him. However, he does not abuse the trust and shows himself a good fellow from the moment when he is called in. He hardly enjoys his revenge, for action absorbs him entirely."

In the chapter "On Prestige" de Gaulle lists the concrete instructions on how a great man should conduct himself. They will become iron rules with him, and he will endeavour never to deviate from them. The main thing is that one should use all means to keep up the prestige, including playacting and dissembling before the public.

"...Prestige does not go down well without mystery, for one little reveres what one knows too well... The intentions, manner, the movements of the spirit must have an element about them which the others cannot grasp and which moves them and keeps them in suspense... Such reticence of the soul usually goes hand in hand with the reticence in gestures and words. These are appearances, perhaps, but they are what the multitude bases its opinions on... among those who command, the least important simply try to comport themselves well before their troops, while the greatest ones prepare their appearances carefully. They make an art of it, which Flaubert grasped very well when he described, in *Salammbô*, the effect produced on the hesitant soldiers by the calculated appearance of Amilcar. Every page of the *Commentaries* shows us the way in which Caesar calculated his public gestures. One is aware that Napoleon took care to show himself always under conditions when the minds would be struck forcibly by the appearance..."

"Reserve, character, grandeur, these conditions of prestige, impose on those who want to attain them an effort that daunts the great majority. This incessant constraint, this risk constantly run, try personalities to the most secret fibers of their souls. This results, in those who thus coerce themselves, in a state of internal strife, more or less acute depending on their temperament, which never ceases to wound their soul, as the hairshirt scratches the penitent at every step. One touches here on the cause of resignations not easily explained: men who have succeeded in everything and are acclaimed by everyone suddenly throwing off the burden. Besides, holding himself aloof from the others, the leader deprives himself of the pleasures of the ease of manners, familiarity, and even of friendship. He dooms himself to that feeling of solitude which is, according to Faguet, 'the misery of superior men'. The state of satisfaction, of latent peace, of calculated joy, which is conventionally referred to as happiness, is incompatible with domination... Hence

that melancholy something which impregnates all that is august: men as well as things. Before some antique and noble monument, someone said to Bonaparte, 'That is sad! ', and the latter replied, 'Yes, that is sad—like greatness! "

Some of de Gaulle's remarks on the norms of behaviour of a man of action, a leader, may cause astonishment and suspicions of cynicism. Thus he writes that "a man of action is inconceivable without a strong dose of egoism, arrogance, harshness, and cunning". On another occasion he says that "a politician uses all his skill to seduce [the crowd], dissimulating as the hour demands, affirming nothing that is not opportune. To become a master, he poses as a servant..."

In *The Edge of the Sword*, de Gaulle considers many other problems, such as the training of armed forces and their employment by the state, the problem of relations between the government and the command, various aspects of the "philosophy of action", etc. There is a great deal of militarism, nationalism, a kind of personality cult, about it all. There is not a trace of democracy in the book, for the people are present here merely as a passive crowd needing the strong man's leadership. However, the content of the book is prompted by the best of intentions, by concern about France's destiny in the future war and about its security. From beginning to end, the book is permeated by the author's ambitious claims, easily read between the lines, to something that is not quite clear to himself as yet but is certain to be great and exceptional. De Gaulle embellished the whole book and each of its chapters with a selection of telling epigraphs. The book starts with the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet: "Rightly to be great is not to stir without great argument..." Goethe's Faust also speaks out here: "In the beginning was the Word? No! In the beginning was the Act." And the chapter "On Prestige" is ornamented with a device from Villiers de l'Isle Adam: "In his breast, to carry his own glory."

De Gaulle was obviously full of determination to join a great battle, to pursue a great cause, and to gain great glory, the more so that now he had in his hands a manual clearly indicating the course of action for becoming—de Gaulle.

Here is what Alexander Werth, the well-known English historian and journalist, wrote of this book: "That de Gaulle had great erudition, a rare classical style of writing, and a superior mind is clearly revealed by *Le fil de l'épée*. But it also reveals a vast superiority complex and almost certainly a faith in himself as a man of destiny. And it explains very clearly, eight years in advance, just *why* he 'rebelled' in 1940. Character, Prestige, and a Doctrine, according to de Gaulle, are the three main elements that make a great soldier and leader of men. And in all three chapters we find passages that look like X-rays of de Gaulle's own 'mysterious' mind."

Let us resume, however, our account of the concrete circumstances of his life, interrupted by this review of the book *The Edge of the Sword* (which hopefully brought us closer to an understanding of those circumstances). In 1932, de Gaulle was transferred from the Beirut headquarters back to Paris. Unlike Napoleon, who, upon his return from those environs, led the 18 Brumaire coup, de Gaulle assumed the modest post of a secretary of the Supreme Council of National Defence (*le Conseil supérieur de la Défense nationale*), a permanent organ at the Prime Minister's office concerned with preparation of the state for war. Still, it was a promotion, a new step forward in de Gaulle's career, the more so that soon after, in 1933, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel.

De Gaulle was now in a position where he was closer to the persons and institutions that decided the destiny of France. He could now assess the state measures for the country's defence not only on the basis of newspaper information and conversations with his colleagues: he had access to most important secret documents, plans, and decisions. All of this was of enormous interest to him, and he became completely engrossed in his new work. He worked at the Supreme Council of National Defence from 1932 to 1937, except for a short period spent at the Centre for Advanced Military Studies (*le Centre des hautes études militaires*), generally known in the army as "a school for marshals" (*"l'école des maréchaux"*).

De Gaulle studied various political, technical, and administrative problems of the country's defence. He was entrusted with working out the measures for mobilisation of the administration, industry, and municipal services in the event of war. He even participated in the elaboration of the plans for disarmament and security propounded by France at the League of Nations. His scepticism, if not downright disdain, for these plans are well known. Particularly great demands on his time and efforts were made by the bill for reorganising the state during war. He had to overhaul it dozens of times. Later, he would recall: "The work I had to do, the discussions at which I was present, the contacts I was obliged to make, showed me the extent of our resources, but also the feebleness of the state."

De Gaulle's involvement in preparing the law for state organisation during war taught him more than anything else did; he was engaged on that project for more than six years. The first draft of that bill dates from 1923. In March 1927, the Chamber of Deputies passed it, but the Senate introduced certain amendments. The bill went back to the Chamber, where it was passed again, and again the Senate introduced some more amendments. The bill was buried. Now de Gaulle was given the task of renovating it, which he did. But no one wanted to be bothered with it at the height of the eco-

nomie crisis. Then de Gaulle decided to use his familiar ruse and went to the public. In January 1934, he published the article "Economic Mobilisation Abroad" (*Mobilisation économique à l'étranger*) in the *Revue militaire française*. However, it took a year and a half of all kinds of coordination for the bill to be introduced into parliament, which, after a great deal of delay, passed it in 1938, that is, just eighteen months before the war began.

This represented, however, an exceptionally successful outcome compared to the complete failure of all attempts to prepare the French army for a war that it would inevitably have to wage, as was becoming more and more obvious. Now when de Gaulle could watch at close quarters the activities (or rather inactivity) of the French military machine, he came to the bitter conviction that France again lagged one war behind other nations. Military leaders thought entirely in terms of the 1914-1918 war, the more so that they were proud to wear the laurels of victors. The membership of the French General Staff had remained unchanged since 1919. The senile military leaders of the past war still stood at the head of the armed forces. Marshal Pétain was vice-chairman of the Supreme Military Council until 1931, when he was replaced by Weygand, followed by Gamelin who occupied that post until the 1940 defeat. Living entirely on their memories of the past war, they drew completely arbitrary lessons from it. The price which France had to pay for victory was a closely guarded secret; books about the war went through special censorship. For example, few persons knew that French infantry lost 70 per cent of its men and officers as dead or wounded, whereas the casualties of the German army were only 40 per cent. The motto of the French army at the beginning of the past war was "offensive at any price" (*l'offensive à tout prix*). Now it was getting ready for "defence at any price" (*la défense à tout prix*). At first sight, that looked as if it had learnt the lesson of the previous war. But that was an illusion, for the conditions had become drastically changed. Both types of tactics proved to be fatal for France. De Gaulle correctly believed that nothing could be as dangerous to the nation as a fear of free discussion of the outcome of the past war.

Since 1921, Pétain had fought, quite successfully, for the construction of fortifications along the north-eastern border of France. But the border with Belgium was not fortified. On becoming the War Minister in the Doumergue cabinet in 1934, he ordered construction of some fortifications on the Franco-Belgian border to be immediately discontinued. The Ardennes are impenetrable, the old Marshal insisted.

Any proposals for equipping the armed forces with the latest machines were rejected. Even elementary motorisation was declared to be harmful. General Brécard, Inspector General of Cavalry

and member of the Supreme Military Council, called the plan for mechanising two divisions a "most dangerous utopia". The Air Force was intended for defence only. No bombers were built, and as for low-flying attack aircraft, there were even no plans for building them. Tanks were believed to be only suitable as support for infantry. They were scattered throughout numerous units, slow, and armed with light guns only. Artillery could only operate from previously prepared positions and was unfit for mobile warfare or offensives. The most elementary aspects were neglected. The start of the war revealed a shortage of revolvers, footwear, and blankets. The armed forces could only be made ready for war by 1942.

All the governments approved of the generals' inactivity, as France was in a continuous and severe financial crisis up to 1939: that way the army consumed less money. Even the finances available were spent in a fantastic manner. 66 per cent went to pay the officers' salaries; 10 per cent, to keep the men; and only 24 per cent, to buy equipment etc. for the army.

Pétain, Weygand, and other elderly gentlemen in gold lace uniforms pictured the coming war as a spell of waiting quietly for Germany's inevitable collapse as a result of blockade and attrition. The French army, ensconced behind the reinforced concrete of the Maginot Line, would merely have to endure the tedium of patiently watching Germany's disintegration. The main thing would be to keep out of fighting as much as possible.

This military doctrine doomed France's diplomacy to passivity and isolation. It was becoming increasingly clear that her allies in the east—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the others—were condemned to be Germany's first victims. What sort of help from France could they look to, when she had declared that she was not going to deploy her forces outside her own borders? The Little Entente disintegrated. The strategy of political and military passivity contained yet another error, particularly fatal for France, which de Gaulle was quick to sense. "I believe ... that Russia was being discouraged from forming any bond with us..." he later recalled.

Working as secretary of the Supreme Council of National Defence, de Gaulle could see and comprehend all of this. As for possibilities for action, they were extremely limited—considering the Lieutenant-Colonel's modest official standing. He could, of course, improve some of the drafts, or lend momentum to a bill, as was the case with the law of state organisation during war. But these small achievements had little bearing on de Gaulle's main concerns and thus could bring him no satisfaction. He had visions of operating on a much grander scale. He had to act: that much was clear. So far, he had merely propounded certain ideas in his books and articles, and most general ideas at that, like those he expressed on

the French military doctrine or the essence and role of war, army, and military leader, as in the book *The Edge of the Sword*. Even if de Gaulle had a more attentive audience, it would be hard to expect these rather abstract designs to bring about any immediate real consequences. De Gaulle realised the pressing need for more concrete practical proposals. But what could those proposals be? It would be hopeless to try to get an answer to this question from men surrounding him in the service. Marshal Pétain and others like him lived in an atmosphere of servility. He was only expected to enthuse about their views—and de Gaulle did not share those views at all.

However, beginning with 1932, when de Gaulle returned to Paris, he was able to associate with persons of quite a different circle. Lieutenant-Colonel Lucien Nachin, whose sympathy and confidence he had won long ago, introduced him to a very unusual and also very interesting person, the eighty-year-old retired officer Emile Mayer. He had once been to the same lycée as Joffre, while his friend at l'Ecole polytechnique had been Foch. But his friends had become marshals and were regarded as great military leaders, while Mayer remained a modest lieutenant-colonel to the end of his days. There was nothing surprising about that, as Mayer's most prominent traits were originality of views, extraordinary erudition and honesty. He first damaged his career as early as 1895, when he stated quite openly that he did not believe Dreyfus to be guilty. Soon after, that officer published the pamphlet *No More Army, No more War* (*Plus d'armée, plus de guerre*). In 1917 he tried to help his friend Lucien Nachin, taken prisoner by Germans: he wrote a letter to the German camp authorities asking for Nachin's release. To flatter the Germans, he sang praises to the "greatness of the German people's soul" in his letter. The French military censorship stopped the letter, of course, and Mayer had some more unpleasantness. That was the way in which he pursued his career. That man's whole life, however, lay in the sphere of intellectual concerns. In his youth, he was a friend of Hippolyte Taine, an outstanding French bourgeois thinker of the 19th century. He had close links with major writers and political figures. For example, he corresponded with Roger Martin Du Gard, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature.

A man of unusually wide-ranging intellectual interests, he became a military theoretician and journalist. He published a great many articles, and some of them were strikingly shrewd. In 1903, when the official French military ideologists nurtured plans for 'an offensive at any price', he predicted that trench warfare would prevail and that fire power would make active offensive very difficult. Pétain's worship for the supremacy of the artillery may well be traced to his views. There was a time when the future Mar-

shal won young de Gaulle's respect precisely because of those views.

Mayer was greatly impressed by de Gaulle's firm character, unshakeable convictions, principles and desire for action. The old man became at once attracted to this unusual officer, whose independent views and mode of conduct set him apart from the other military. Lucien Nachin also introduced de Gaulle to other intellectuals, military and civil. A circle was formed, the soul of which was Emile Mayer, while de Gaulle gradually became its central figure. In this way the first Gaullists may be said to have emerged.

This company assembled every Monday at the café Dumesnil, opposite the Montparnasse Railway Station. De Gaulle often invited them to his flat in the Place Saint-François-Xavier. There were long conversations in the salon of Grunebaum-Ballin, Mayer's son-in-law, at his flat in the Boulevard Beauséjour. During six years, this society would be a kind of spiritual refuge for de Gaulle. Here he tested the correctness of his ideas, offering them as subjects for discussion, and here he learnt a great deal. Of particularly great significance for him was the personal contact with Emile Mayer who, in the view of Jean Lacouture, "was probably the only person, apart from André Malraux, to have exercised a direct influence on the spirit and life of Charles de Gaulle". Lacouture affirmed even that it was in the conversations of Mayer and de Gaulle that the idea of creating a professional armoured force was born, an idea that would soon become de Gaulle's campaign programme.

Generally speaking, that idea was in the air at the time. Introduction of new machines into armies and, in this connection, revolutionary changes in tactics, minor strategy and strategy as such, were the inevitable consequences of industrial development and new technical attainments. De Gaulle had a thorough knowledge of military history, and he could cite numerous battles of the remote past in which the baron cavalry performed miracles. The high degree of invulnerability made it an irresistible ramming force. Now motors took the place of horse, and armour, the place of the cuirasses and helmets of the past. Tanks were the force that would play the decisive role. Tanks would save France.

De Gaulle had long realised that France would not be able to compete with the future enemy, that is to say, Germany, in the number of her troops, her population being much smaller. What is more, there was an unprecedented demographic slump in France in the 1930s. Before the First World War, the annual birth rate was 830,000, while in the 1930s it dropped to 620,000. More people died than were born. A century ago, the French constituted one sixth of Europe's population, and in the 1930's, only one sixteenth. This tragic decrease in France's manpower had to be somehow compensated for. In short, whatever aspects of the problem of France's

security de Gaulle and Emile Mayer touched upon, they invariably came to the conclusion that what was needed was a powerful, mobile and small strike force. The argument thus again reverted to tanks.

De Gaulle kept up with the military literature and the practical experiences of various armies. Everywhere he found confirmation of his hypothesis. Already in the First World War, the British used a separate tank corps quite successfully. The British General John Fuller and military theoretician Liddell Hart vigorously defended, already in those years, the idea of using large armoured units as independent formations.

Similar attempts were made in France, too, despite the general scornful attitude to tanks on the part of the military command. On April 17, 1917, General Estienne sent into battle a tank unit he had mustered for that purpose ahead of infantry battalions. After the war, in 1920, General Estienne proposed forming an army of 100 thousand capable of marching 80 kilometres in one night. The strike force of this army would be a corps of four thousand tanks and 20 thousand personnel. General Estienne was known in the armed forces as the "father of tanks" (*le "père des chars"*). In 1928 General Doumenc submitted a project for an armoured division to the High Command. It was rejected. True, in 1933, the nucleus of a tank division was built at the Suippes camp out of vehicles gathered from different units, but it was only intended for reconnaissance and protection.

But the French High Command rejected outright the idea of large-scale independent operations by tank units. The "Temporary Instructions for the Tactical Employment of Large Units" (*L'introduction provisoire sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités*), compiled in 1921 under Pétain's guidance, was still in force. This war manual insisted that infantry was the principal striking force, and that its advance should be "preceded, protected and accompanied by artillery fire, and eventually aided by tanks and aviation". It was expressly ordered to regard tanks merely as a force supporting infantry. That was the tactics of the war of 1914-1918.

In Germany, however, the approach was quite different. The German war manuals envisaged independent operations mounted by tank units, which had to make full use of their mobility and fire power.

De Gaulle believed that procrastination in the matter of putting his ideas into practice was not to be thought of, for with each day he became more and more convinced that war was imminent. He began working vigorously on elaborating his ideas. Realising that it would be naive to submit them for discussion within the framework of the military hierarchy, he decided to speak out before the public. In his *War Memoirs*, he writes: "...In January 1933 Hitler

became master of the Reich. From that moment, things could only move headlong. If no one proposed anything that would meet the situation, I felt myself bound to appeal to public opinion and bring forward my own plan. But as the matter was likely to have consequences, I must expect a day to come when the spotlights of public life would settle on me. It was hard for me to make up my mind to this after twenty-five years spent under military rules."

Let us note that he had long resented this submission to the "rules". And it did not take long for him "to make up his mind". For indeed he had high hopes of being "in the spotlight", at last.

TANKS

Charles de Gaulle joined his first real battle. Some of the Dumesnil company warned him that he would have to choose between his career and his "mission". "*Le Connétable*" preferred to be a man of ideas, not of gold lace. Without hesitation, he started his assault single-handed. His opponents were Hitler — and the French General Staff!

De Gaulle started writing a new book, in which he intended to set down his plan and his ideas. But time was pressing, and he published, to begin with, an article — on May 10, 1933, and not in an official military journal but in the *Revue politique et parlementaire*.

Events developed at breakneck speed, he wrote, and it was criminal to waste time keeping personnel in barracks. Modern technical equipment again made quality superior to quantity. From now on, on land just as at sea and in the air, select personnel, using powerful weapons to maximum advantage, could gain superiority over the enemy at the very start of a war. He underlined that selecting the best units as a striking force was a tradition of long standing with the French army originating in the times of the great king Philippe-Auguste. De Gaulle expressed the gist of his idea in the words of the poet Paul Valéry: "We shall see the development of enterprises carried out by chosen men, acting in crews and producing, in a few moments, at a time and place unforeseen, shattering results."

De Gaulle ends with these words: "Progress and tradition demand that the élite should be restored in France, for the good of all. This effort will, of course, cost a great deal, for the corps will always have to keep abreast of the changes in technology. But its renovated power and young prestige will bring generous returns. Indeed, the astringent juice brings not only a promise but also a worry to an age-old tree. Alas, can renovation be attained without self-abnegation? In Grieg's immortal music, we hear muffled melancholy, bursting through the joyous fanfares of ecstatic spring singing."

Everything that de Gaulle has ever written bears the imprint of personal emotions. Here too, the demand for "self-abnegation"

is imposed in the first place upon himself.

Exactly a year later, in May 1934, Berger-Levrault published de Gaulle's book *Towards a Professional Army* (*Ver l'armée de métier*). Dealing with problems of strategy and tactics, and with numerous technical details of building an armoured army, the book is nevertheless written with the literary sparkle characteristic of its author. Well aware of the value of an eloquent phrase, de Gaulle prefers to quote, in the body of the work or as epigraphs, the words of poets, writers and philosophers rather than the boring formulas of military theoreticians. He cites such writers as Anatole France, Maurice Maeterlinck, Jean Richepin, Albert Samain, Georges Duhamel, and such thinkers as Blaise Pascal, François de La Rochefoucauld, and Georg Hegel. Far from eclipsing the harsh and even menacing meaning of the book, the quotations accentuate its uncommon dramatic quality.

In the first chapter, "Protection", de Gaulle characterises in the first place France's geographical position, citing Napoleon's words: "The policy of a state is decided by its geography" (*La politique d'un Etat est dans sa géographie*). The "terrible gap" in its north-eastern border offers convenient routes for an invasion, where there are no geographic obstacles to impede it. De Gaulle predicts that in the coming war the territory of Belgium will be used for the enemy invasion. He then compares the national psychology and the traditions of the "two races", Gauls and Germans, showing the causes of Germany's irrepressible expansion and the habitual unpreparedness of France, always caught unawares by war. He believes that in the future war the destiny of France can be decided by one tragic blow. De Gaulle draws the following conclusion from all this: "The moment has come to add to the mass of our reserves and of our recruits, which is the principal element of the national resistance but is slow to gather and cumbrous to set to work, an instrument of manoeuvre capable of acting without delay — that is to say, permanent, coherent, and accustomed to arms."

In the second chapter, "Technique", de Gaulle writes of the inevitability and necessity for mechanising the army. Its effective use requires the soldiers' professional training similar to the training of engineers and technicians in the advanced branches of industry. This kind of training, however, was impossible in France where national service was limited to one year. Besides, as de Gaulle bitterly noted, "there was talk of eight months and expectations that six or four would be proposed". He drew the conclusion that under the existing system it was impossible to teach the soldier to operate the latest technical equipment. He goes on to describe the battle potential of the machines, with special praise reserved for tanks. This chapter, incorporating the

basic propositions of the article he had earlier published, shows that effective use of technical equipment requires high skills from those who operate it and, consequently, long military service.

The third chapter, "Policy", demonstrates the intimate links between foreign policy and military organisation. Although France did not intend to acquire any more territories, her national interests could not be protected by defensive weapons and equipment only. The army should be able to support the allies in any part of Europe. "With how much blood and tears," wrote de Gaulle, "did we pay for the error of the Second Empire in letting Sadowa happen without moving the army to the Rhine?... We must then be ready to act abroad, at any time, on any occasion. The formation of a professional army for preventive and repressive action is a necessary condition of successful foreign policy and of the triumph of the principle of collective security, which can only be ensured through reliance on strength."

Comparing then the economic and industrial potential of France and Germany, he points out the superiority of the latter. The manpower situation is the same. "For each Frenchman between twenty and thirty, there are two Germans, two Italians, five Russians... It is none the less certain that future French victories will no longer be those of big battalions." It followed that the relative weakness of France should be made up for by a special organisation of its army.

The fourth chapter, "Composition", gives the concrete details of the professional army concept. That army of a hundred thousand consists of seven divisions equipped to the teeth with machines, especially tanks. De Gaulle worked out in detail the structure of the army, the distribution of the personnel, and the organisation of various auxiliary services. Only volunteers would be recruited in this army, and they would serve six years. Later these handpicked soldiers could be used as noncommissioned officers in the conscript army forming the bulk of the armed forces.

In the fifth chapter, "Employment", de Gaulle sets out his plans for the practical operations of his ideal army in breaking through the enemy's strong defences. He paints a picture of rapid deployment of large armoured units during one night, simultaneous charges of 3,000 tanks on a 50 km front, cooperation of the strike force with the auxiliary units of motorised infantry, aviation and artillery. Possible rate of advance, 50 km within the course of a day's battle. After a breakthrough in the defence, writes de Gaulle, "will lie open the road to great victories, to those victories which, by their deep and rapidly extended effects, lead to a general collapse among the enemy... Thus will be restored that strategic extension of tactical results which once used

to constitute the supreme end and, as it were, the nobility of the art”.

In the sixth and last chapter, “The High Command”, de Gaulle analyses changes in directing a war which building a professional striking force would entail. The commander’s personality now assumes an incomparably greater role. Previously, he could direct operations from a well-fortified command post, while now he would have to fight in the advance lines, in the thick of things. This is the only way for him to run his troops in a battle developing at an unprecedented speed. De Gaulle expresses here some ideas echoing those of his previous book *The Edge of the Sword*. Generally speaking, the book largely continues the ideas previously expounded by de Gaulle.

Now, who was to implement the reform he suggested? De Gaulle made it clear that he placed no hopes in the army command itself, the latter being stagnant, backward, and deeply hostile to everything that was bold and new. De Gaulle stated categorically that the reorganisation of the army was the task of the state. At this point, however, it all became rather hazy. As far as the organisation of the future professional army was concerned, he calculated everything, even to the role of each battalion, whereas there was a great deal of vagueness about the realisation of his project. Indeed, he made no appeal to any of the numerous political parties existing in France at the time or to any of the prominent political figures. His hopes were for the state in general. But it was the state that de Gaulle held responsible for the army’s decay and its unpreparedness for war. In his *War Memoirs* he writes that “the military, who received from the state no more than spasmodic and contradictory impulses, continued to defer to doctrine”. Sharply criticising the doctrine of passivity professed at the time, he stressed that it “suited the spirit of the regime”. How could he hope that this regime, so completely inadequate, in his view, could implement so serious a reform? True, de Gaulle remarked that it would need a person like Louvois or Carnot.

Louvois, Louis XIV’s minister, went down in history as a radical military reformer, the creator of a regular army supplied with the most modern of weapons. In particular, he raised select shock regiments armed with quick-firing guns instead of the old muskets. He was also remembered for his *dragonnades* or reprisals against Protestants. Lazare Carnot was an exceptionally talented and vigorous organiser, military leader and scholar of the times of the Great French Revolution and Napoleon. During the Revolution, his legendary activities brought him the honourable reputation of the “Organiser of Victory”.

The success of Louvois’ activity was ensured by the absolute

power of Louis XIV. As for Carnot, he relied on the power of the popular masses called to life by the revolution. There was nothing of the sort in France in the mid-1930’s. Besides, it wasn’t as if de Gaulle thought that any of the contemporary political or military leaders could compare with Louvois or Carnot in their personal qualities. It may perhaps be assumed that de Gaulle hinted at himself.

Finally, the book *Towards a Professional Army* contained something that went far beyond the limits of the concrete question analysed in it, something that may be viewed as de Gaulle’s frank and clear intention of reforming not only the army but also the whole of the French state. He insisted that the military reform was only a part or element of overhauling the country’s political system. He wrote: “But in the fact that this national recasting must begin with the Army there would be nothing that would not be in harmony with the natural order of things. In that case, in the hard toil which is needed to rejuvenate France, her Army will serve her as a standby and as ferment. For the sword is the axis of the world, and greatness is not divisible.”

The vague phrases about the “rejuvenation” of the state seemed rather mysterious. The point was that de Gaulle’s third book appeared at a time of a widespread swing towards authoritarianism and the emergence of a fascist movement in France. The hardships of the economic crisis had given rise to discontent among the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. This became the social basis for the revival of old and spreading of new organisations of the Fascist type inspired by the success of similar movements in Germany and Italy. Among the numerous pro-Fascist groups, leagues, organisations, unions, etc., the most influential were Colonel de la Rocque’s “Military Crosses” (*Croix-de-Feu*), Charles Maurras’ old *L’Action française*, and the veterans’ movement.

On February 6, 1934, they tried to seize the Palais-Bourbon where the Chamber of Deputies was in session. Clashes between the fascists and the police ended in bloodshed. But the principal force that stopped fascism was the working class headed by the Communist Party. The fascist danger compelled Socialists to cooperate with Communists. The fierce struggle between the fascists and the Left continued until the war, later developing into a duel between the Vichy government and the Resistance.

The ideology of rank anti-parliamentarism, the desire for “renovating” the state, and noisy chauvinism became widespread. At times, these ideas sounded clearly in unison with de Gaulle’s views expressed in his last book. As a matter of fact, even his previous work *The Edge of the Sword* evoked a positive response among the leaders of the *Action française* — those protagonists of “integral nationalism” which looked so much like de Gaulle’s.

However, the rapprochement with Charles Maurras' organisation proved to be much weaker than de Gaulle's distrust of its vocal "patriotism". Besides, de Gaulle wanted to be politically independent, without ties to any particular party or grouping.

That does not at all mean that he preferred the parties of the Left, which were becoming increasingly more influential. Communists, Socialists, and Radicals, who formed the Popular Front coalition, received an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies during the 1936 parliamentary elections. The Popular Front government headed by Léon Blum came to power. The working people won certain concessions from the employers, like the 40-hour working week and the paid leave. The bourgeoisie naturally resented all this bitterly. As for de Gaulle, his attitude to the Popular Front was also negative. Interestingly, he has not a word of censure for the fascist groups of the Croix-de-Feu type in his memoirs. As to the Popular Front, he refers to it inimically as a coalition. De Gaulle believed that social reforms would slow down defence production, weaken the effort of preparing for war, and increase dissention and conflicts within the nation. A conservative social instinct will always affect his conduct just as strongly as his conviction of the dominant significance of the national factor.

Thus de Gaulle's political orientation during a most acute internal political crisis was undoubtedly a Rightist one, though independent of any definite parties or groups. It was reflected in a very general form in the book *Towards a Professional Army*, totally lacking in democratic tendencies of any sort. In a word, de Gaulle did not accept the ideas of any political party, gradually evolving views that would later be called Gaullism. In any case, he rejected fascism, whose extremes simply shocked him, the more so that German Nazism was then associated with a threat to France's security, which was of supreme importance for him. In the final analysis, it was of no consequence for him which party and what leaders would implement the plan for building a professional armoured army.

For the time being, the plan existed only on paper, in the form of a small book published in several thousand copies. Only 750 of these were sold. De Gaulle wrote later: "My book aroused interest at first, but no deep feeling." Indeed, that was precisely the case in France. Ironically, the book was a success in a place where, de Gaulle would least welcome it — in Germany. It was promptly translated there and had a much greater readership there than in the author's native country. Hitler's advisers reported to him on the book, and he studied it. It was carefully read by such German generals as Keitel, von Brauchitsch, and in particular General Heinz Guderian, the most active proponent of mass

employment of tanks and author of the well-known book *Attention, Tanks! (Achtung, Panzer!)*; they drew practical conclusions from de Gaulle's work, though it cannot be said to have come as a sudden revelation to them. Its main ideas had been expressed by various authors before that as well. De Gaulle merely systematised them, applying them to concrete conditions and presenting them in an extremely impressive form. At about that time, the book by the Austrian General von Eimmansberger *War of Battle Machines (Kampfwagenkrieg)* appeared, which echoed many of de Gaulle's ideas and attracted a great deal of attention in Hitlerite Germany. The Germans took the coming war seriously, and they were vigorously preparing for it, rejecting nothing that would come in useful. Running ahead of the story a bit, it should be noted that the methods of organising typical tank units during World War II would largely coincide with the structure of a tank division worked out by de Gaulle.

In his book about de Gaulle, Philippe Barrès (son of the writer Maurice Barrès of whom we have spoken above) cites the following dialogue between himself and von Ribbentrop at the end of 1934, in which the Hitlerite diplomat rather let himself go: "As for the Maginot Line, we shall break through it by using tanks.... Our specialist, General Guderian, confirms that. I know that your best technical specialist is of the same opinion." "And who is our best specialist?" asked Barrès, and heard this answer: "Gaulle, Colonel de Gaulle. Is it true that he is so little known in your country?"

Truly, a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country! If de Gaulle's book was noticed, it was immediately rejected. A month after its publication, Edouard Daladier, War Minister in four cabinets, spoke in the Chamber of Deputies on the defence budget. This influential Radical leader had a reputation as a major authority on military issues. Without referring directly to de Gaulle and his book, he clearly took issue with them. Pointing to the experiences of 1914, he rejected out of hand the idea of any offensive action and sang the praises of defensive tactics based on the Maginot Line. Daladier said this: "Our choice was made a long time ago, and the choice is that we prefer to organise a defence in concrete, with a powerful system of automatic weapons, whose terrible effectiveness against the attacking troops was shown by the war."

Then General Weygand, until January 1935 Chief of the General Staff, wrote an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* against de Gaulle. Assuming that de Gaulle's plan would result in dividing the army into two portions, he declared: "Two armies — not at any price!" In his view, the available armed forces were sufficient: "We have ... a mechanized, motorized, and mounted reserve.

There is nothing to create, everything exists." Actually, France then had only one light armoured division at Reims.

Later, at equestrian competitions in Lille, General Weygand said: "I think that the French army now has some remarkable qualities which it has never had in all its history: it has weapons of the highest quality, first-class fortifications, excellent morale and outstanding high command... If we are called upon to win a new victory, we shall win it..."

General Gamelin, who replaced Weygand as Chief of General Staff, insisted, in his turn: "I do not believe in Colonel de Gaulle's theories. They are not marked by wisdom. They are not realistic... They are like a flare-up of dry straw."

When de Gaulle's book appeared, his old-time patron Marshal Pétain was the War Minister in Doumergue's government. Now, what was his attitude to the plan for building an armoured shock army? Clearly, his position could be decisive for de Gaulle's success or failure. A great deal had changed since the Junior Lieutenant had admired his chief's independent views. Pétain was a different man. It was apparently no accident that as early as 1914, his file in the personnel department bore the legend: "Do not allow to go beyond Brigadier-General."

Already in the early 1920's de Gaulle saw for himself just how narrow-minded and hidebound the Marshal was. True, the relations between them still remained good, but they were becoming less and less intimate and cordial. After 1927, de Gaulle ceased to be a frequent visitor at Pétain's. However, his appointment to a post at the Supreme Council of National Security was largely due to Pétain's patronage.

The publication of the book *Towards a Professional Army* roused Pétain's indignation, and it was he who incited the critique of de Gaulle's theories by the prominent military. True, the Lieutenant-Colonel was still invited to the dinners given by the Marshal at the Café de Paris. The differences between them increased, and not only on purely military issues. In his old age, the Marshal became involved in political games of the shadier sort. He flirted with French fascists, arranging meetings with Colonel de La Rocque, who at one time was his subordinate. The fascists openly named Pétain their candidate for dictatorship. Besides, he used various official ceremonies to establish contacts with prominent Hitlerites, clearly expressing sympathy for fascist dictators. As for de Gaulle, his patriotic feelings steered him towards anti-fascism, despite his conservative views.

The final severance of relations between Pétain and de Gaulle came about as a result of the controversial publication of de Gaulle's book *France and Her Army* (*La France et son armée*) in 1938. Reflecting de Gaulle's original conception of the history

and role of the army, the book showed that for centuries the army embodied the soul and the future of France. In his memoirs, de Gaulle wrote: "I published *La France et son armée*... the final warning which, from my modest place, I addressed to my country on the eve of the cataclysm." The book was based on the materials on the history of the French army which de Gaulle had prepared back in 1925 on Pétain's instructions. When the publishers approached de Gaulle with a view to producing the book, the latter wrote to Pétain for his permission to publish the work written under the Marshal's aegis. The vain old man would only give his consent if he were to figure either as its co-author or as its principal inspirer. That was quite in keeping with the age-old tradition (not wholly limited to France) of exalted personages appropriating the literary laurels due to the authors who happened to be their subordinates. In this case, however, Pétain met his match: de Gaulle showed his adamant character. There are several versions of the story of this conflict. For instance, La Gorce, one of the most authoritative biographers of de Gaulle, writes this: "Pétain demanded the right to sign the book as its author. De Gaulle, who wrote it alone, did not consent to this and omitted the dedication in which he had intended to thank Pétain for permission to undertake that work. This conflict came before a special commission of the army's historical service, which pronounced de Gaulle in the right."

Marshal Pétain spoke with rage of de Gaulle's "ingratitude" and "heartlessness", cutting him dead at all kinds of official occasions. De Gaulle returned this treatment with a vengeance. Consultations were then in progress on the formation of a new government, in which Pétain could become Minister for War. De Gaulle was offered the post of State Secretary in the same ministry. Rejecting the offer in no uncertain terms, he said this about Pétain: "Do not trust him, he is a person of redoubtable duplicity."

Beginning with 1934 and until the start of the war, Pétain sharply rejected all of de Gaulle's suggestions. In a preface to General Chauvineau's book *Is an Invasion Still Possible?* (*Une invasion est-elle encore possible?*) he declared an enemy invasion to be out of the question: "A fortified front along the Maginot Line makes the European equilibrium more stable." As for the armoured forces, Pétain wrote this: "What might happen if a large mass of tanks moved to the Paris area?... Troops redeployed on lorries and a few tanks would be sufficient to avert a possible invasion of German armoured units." He also insisted that "direct participation of enemy air force in battles is an illusion."

De Gaulle clearly saw that this blindness of high military command was fraught with the threat of a terrible catastrophe

for France. That was why he was so unyielding in his crusade for building an armoured shock army. De Gaulle had long had nothing but contempt for such institutions of French political life as parliament and its deputies, the government with its ministers, and, of course, the press and the journalists. And now he began to haunt the offices of these gentlemen. The *Connétable's* enormous figure could be seen looming in the dirty corridors of editorial offices, he waited with patience for editors to receive him, gave lunches and dinners to journalists, asked them to take a look at his manuscripts, and even silently listened to their arrogant lectures. On more than one occasion he was rudely rebuffed and even humiliated, which was particularly degrading for a man like de Gaulle. However, he endured it all in the name of his ultimate goal — saving France.

In the end, de Gaulle managed to get several journalists interested in his ideas, and they started an active propaganda campaign. Thus, André Pironneau, editor of *L'Echo de Paris*, published forty articles explaining de Gaulle's plans. Rémy Roure, his former fellow prisoner at Ingolstadt, vigorously defended them in *Le Temps* newspaper. Articles in favour of building an armoured corps appeared in *Le Journal des débats*, *L'Ordre*, *L'Aube*, and other papers. His loyal comrades-in-arms, Lucien Nachin and Emile Mayer, also spared no efforts, publishing quite a few articles in various journals. De Gaulle even managed to enlist the support of some generals, such as Baratier, de Cugnac, and Duval, who also spoke up in the press.

But the admirers of the Maginot Line had no intention whatever of laying down their arms. Their counteroffensive was much more massive, enjoying as it did official support. *Le Figaro* published such articles as "Tanks Are Not Invincible", "The Weakness of the Tanks". The *Mercure de France* wrote: "The Germans, being naturally aggressive, must naturally have Panzer divisions. But France, being pacific and defensive, is bound to be anti-motorization." Some papers and journals made de Gaulle the butt of ridicule and mockery. He was compared to Père Ubu, a character in a satirical comedy embodying egoism and dim-wittedness. Here is a sample of this sort of thing published in a respectable journal: "One is hard put to it to assess, with the courtesy one would wish, ideas which touch the fringe of delirium. Let us simply say that Monsieur de Gaulle was anticipated, some years ago, by the Père Ubu, who was likewise a great tactician with modern ideas. 'When we are back from Poland,' he used to say, 'we will imagine, with the aid of our physical science, a wind machine for transporting the whole army.'"

De Gaulle's plan was attacked not only by the blind defenders of the official military doctrine. He was also sharply criticised

by the Leftist opposition. Their suspicions were fed by de Gaulle's statement in the book *Towards a Professional Army* to the effect that the army must become an instrument for renovating the state, as well as by the vagueness of the book's title. The view was widely held that de Gaulle's plan might result in the emergence of a kind of Pretorian guard capable of becoming an instrument of the reactionaries, their hopes set on a fascist dictatorship. De Gaulle's plan was interpreted by many as a suggestion for liquidating a mass army of the people and for replacing it with a caste of mercenaries, although de Gaulle proposed to maintain a regular mass conscript army which would merely be complemented by a 100,000-strong shock corps with professional training. Léon Blum, leader of the Socialist Party, published late in 1934 a series of articles in the newspaper *Le Populaire* expressing his aversion and uneasiness. Among them were such pieces as "Towards a Professional Army?", and "Down with the Professional Army!"

However, newspaper polemics yielded no practical results, and de Gaulle was anxious to get the support of parliamentary circles. But how was he to penetrate that entirely alien world behind the columns of the Palais-Bourbon? Still, an opportunity was found, again through the mediation of Emile Mayer. In June 1934, de Gaulle met, at Grunbaum-Ballin's, a young man named Jean Auburtin, the son of one of the host's numerous friends, well-connected in political circles. During the very first meeting de Gaulle succeeded in convincing Auburtin of the advantages of his plan. Both came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to convince of the same some well-known political figure. It was decided that Paul Reynaud might be the figure they wanted. Auburtin promised to pass on to him a copy of the book *Towards a Professional Army* signed by the author, and to arrange for him to receive Lieutenant-Colonel de Gaulle.

Paul Reynaud, a capable barrister from a rich family and a prominent member of parliament, habitually occupying a "moderate" bench on the right, was regarded as an authority on questions of finance. He had been a member of several cabinets and showed himself to be an energetic and capable politician, frequently advocating an active foreign policy aimed at consolidating France's positions. True, he was lacking in decisiveness, consistency and independence. For instance, he could never resist the influence of his mistress, the Countess Hélène des Portes, a very active lady with extensive connections ranging from the financial circles to adherents of fascism. In any case, de Gaulle had the impression that Paul Reynaud was a politician with a very promising future. The enormous political ambition of this nimble little man with oriental features made up for his small stature. De Gaulle produced a favourable impression on him, and Reynaud promised

him immediate support. In his book *The French Military Problem* (*Le problème militaire français*) Reynaud wrote this of de Gaulle: "When he presented to me, in 1935, his project for an armoured corps, I suddenly felt the birth of a hope for France's salvation." There are grounds to assume that Reynaud's feelings were of a more practical nature; de Gaulle's project could be effectively used for furthering Reynaud's own political career. De Gaulle, interested only in the destiny of his plan, willingly took upon himself the task of writing Reynaud's speech in the Chamber.

On March 15, 1935, Paul Reynaud presented de Gaulle's project in a speech during the debate on extending the length of national service to two years. That speech was a précis of the basic ideas and arguments contained in *Towards a Professional Army*. "The French problem," said that seasoned orator, "is to create a specialised corps capable of repulsing any attack in a devastating manner. We have a policy; we must have an army suitable to that policy. That policy is assistance and international solidarity. Is it conceivable that this assistance can be limited to passive defence of our territory while M. Hitler has the run of the whole Europe?"

The speech was a success, and soon Reynaud submitted a bill for "the immediate creation of a specialized corps of six divisions of the line, one light division, and general reserves and services, formed of regulars". The personnel of this corps would have to be hired on a contract basis, and it would have to be ready for action not later than April 15, 1940.

The bill was handed over, according to established procedure, to the commission of the Chamber of Deputies on armed forces. After the usual delays, this commission naturally wanted to know the opinion of competent and responsible military organs. As a result, the report on the bill stated devastatingly that the reform of the army was "useless, undesirable, and contradicting logic and history". The bill fell through. This outcome was easy to predict, for as early as March 15, 1935, when Paul Reynaud first mooted the idea of an armoured shock corps, General Maurin, Minister for War, said: "When we have devoted so many efforts to building up a fortified barrier, is it conceivable that we would be mad enough to go ahead of this barrier, into I know not what adventure?"

In fact, the highest military circles regarded de Gaulle as a lunatic, at best. Marshal Pétain, Generals Weygand, Maurin, Georges, Prételat, Dufieux, in short, the whole of the High Command, were openly spiteful to him. They were angered by his budding popularity and his independence. To them, he was a "journalist", "schemer", and "intriguer". At the end of one of the meetings of the Supreme Council for National Defence Gen-

eral Maurin addressed de Gaulle sharply: "Good-bye, de Gaulle! Where I am there's no place for you!" Maurin intended to send de Gaulle to a post in Corsica. As de Gaulle later remembered, "while making the thunder rumble, however, General Maurin had the magnanimity not to launch the thunderbolt".

Yet this "magnanimity" was no great solace to de Gaulle, as his plan for building an armoured corps was as far from realisation as ever. He thought it to be all the more disgraceful as the events bore out his worst apprehensions with fateful monotony.

Before the year was out since the day Hitler seized power, his aggressive programme, openly set out in *Mein Kampf*, began to be implemented. In October 1933, Germany made a spectacular withdrawal from the League of Nations.

In 1934, preparations for seizing Austria began. In July, Chancellor Dollfuß was assassinated by Nazis. In October, fascist assassins shot down in Marseilles the French Foreign Minister Barthou, who tried to revive the plans for collective security, and King Alexander of Yugoslavia. Laval, who became France's Foreign Minister after Barthou, openly began to help the fascist leaders of Germany and Italy to prepare for a world war. In January 1935, he was instrumental in the handing over to Hitler of the Saar province, French-controlled under the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler consolidated his power within Germany and his international positions. In March 1935, he reintroduced conscription. In October, Mussolini attacked Ethiopia, with Laval's connivance. In March 1936, German troops numbering a few battalions only occupied the Rhineland demilitarised zone. If France had sent just one division there (which she had every right to do), Hitler's adventure would have ended in a complete failure and he would hardly have stayed in power. But France did not lift a finger, her only response being Albert Sarraut's unfortunate statement: "We are not inclined to let Strasbourg come under the fire of German guns." A favourable opportunity for averting a new war was wasted. De Gaulle believed that if France had tank divisions, the clatter of their caterpillar tracks and the rumble of their motors would have been enough to put an end to that adventure of Hitler and all the future ones.

But dangerous events came rolling one after another like an avalanche. Franco's rebellion in Spain threatened France from the rear. To the detriment of her obvious national interests, France betrayed Spain, allowing Franco to destroy the Spanish Republic with the help of Hitler and Mussolini. There followed the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, then the Munich Pact and the abandonment of France's ally, Czechoslovakia, which faced Hitler's aggression. Putting up no resistance to the aggressor, France was

nearing a catastrophe.

De Gaulle found himself in the position of a prophet whose predictions were echoed by the events but disregarded by men. Yet he persisted in his crusade for a tank corps, however negligible his chances of success might be. He kept driving Paul Reynaud, for whom de Gaulle's ideas became an important means of increasing his political influence. Of the other Rightist deputies, Jean Le Cour-Grandmaison, member of the parliamentary commission on national defence, became an active proponent of his plan. The well-known politicians Alexandre Millerand, Joseph Paul-Boncour, Camille Chautemps, were also inclined to support de Gaulle's plan.

Despite his conservative political leanings, de Gaulle sought the support of politicians on the Left. He wanted his tune to be sung by different voices, the louder the better. Philippe Serre, Left Catholic, antifascist and supporter of the Popular Front, made fiery speeches in parliament in defence of a professional army. The Socialist Léo Lagrange also became its adherent. De Gaulle had special hopes for the abilities of the former Socialist Marcel Déat, but the latter soon became an out-and-out Hitlerite.

True, the adherents of a military reform sometimes linked with it certain ideas absolutely alien to de Gaulle. Philippe Serre spoke in inspired tones of building "an army that would be at one and the same time 'that of Jaurès and that of Louvois'". Louvois, of course, but how did Jaurès come in here, Jaurès who had visions of a popular army of a Socialist France? Still, de Gaulle moved closer to the antifascist forces. Patriotism was their common bond. Not long before the war, he became a member of the Friends of the *Temps Présent* circle, supporters of a Leftist Catholic publication of antifascist orientation. That did not of course mean that he assimilated the humanist and pacifist ideology of his Leftist allies. To save France, he deemed it permissible to use every means towards that goal. In any case, de Gaulle's connections with his political allies and the choice of such allies drew sharp criticism from many of his colleagues in the army.

De Gaulle had nothing but scepticism and dislike for the social and political upsurge which resulted in the formation of the Popular Front. But he noted and appreciated its dynamism and antifascist nature. He recalled afterwards: "...There was, it seemed to me, the psychological factor which made it possible to break with passivity. It was not inconceivable that, in the presence of National Socialism triumphing at Berlin, fascism reigning at Rome, and falangism advancing on Madrid, the French Republic might be willing simultaneously to transform its social structure and to reform its military power."

De Gaulle's supporters, and in the first place Emile Mayer,

arranged in October 1936 an invitation for him from Léon Blum, the leader of the Socialists and head of the Popular Front government.

On that day, de Gaulle felt bitter satisfaction: yet another of his gloomy predictions had come true. The King of the Belgians, realising that there was little hope of France's help, set aside the alliance with the latter in favour of armed neutrality. Now, it was a fact that Pétain had not extended the Maginot Line to the sea precisely because he set high hopes on that alliance and the Belgian fortifications. True, Hitler gave the King a new "guarantee" of the inviolability of Belgium's borders, which, in the words of one French deputy, was "similar to a death warrant".

Now imagine de Gaulle entering the Premier's office. A bespectacled lean old man, tall though not as tall as de Gaulle himself, rose to meet him, his grey walrus moustache shaking. Blum later described the impression de Gaulle produced on him in the following words: "I saw enter with a calm, and even placid ease, a man whose height, breadth and frame had something gigantic about them... The man who thus presented himself, who looked at me so calmly, who spoke to me with his slow and measured voice, could only, by all the evidence, be occupied at any one time but by one idea, one design, one belief, but then he had to give himself up to it absolutely so that nothing else should enter into consideration. Clemenceau is the extreme type of those temperaments which a misanthropy, often contemptuous, prevents from believing that any action can have useful results and yet which nothing can turn away from action, because action for them is a vital necessity..."

In his high-pitched and somehow childish voice Blum began to assure de Gaulle of his great interest for the latter's plans. "And yet," de Gaulle sharply rejoined, "you have opposed them." "One gets a different perspective," Blum explained, "when one becomes head of the government." They talked of what France would do if Hitler marched on Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. "It's very simple," de Gaulle pointed out sarcastically. "According to circumstances, we shall have a limited call-up or a full mobilisation. Then, peering between the battlements of our fortifications, we shall watch the enslavement of Europe."

"What's that?" cried Léon Blum fearfully. "Would you have us send an expeditionary force to Austria, to Bohemia, to Poland?" "No!" de Gaulle answered. "But if the Wehrmacht advances along the Danube or the Elbe, why shouldn't we go to the Rhine? While it is debouching on the Vistula, why shouldn't we enter the Ruhr? Besides, the mere fact of our being capable of these repostes would no doubt prevent the acts of aggression. But our present system forbids us to stir. The armoured corps, on the contrary, would

induce us to do so. Isn't it true that a government may find a certain relief in feeling that its direction is set in advance?"

The Socialist leader, well-known for his "strategy of synthesis", or of reconciling what cannot be reconciled, courteously agreed: "It would be deplorable, certainly, if our friends in Central and Eastern Europe were temporarily submerged. All the same, in the last resort, nothing would have been achieved for Hitler as long as he had not crushed us. How would he manage that? You will agree that our system, ill adapted though it is to attack, is excellent for defence... In any case, our defensive front and our fortifications would protect our territory."

"Nothing is less certain," replied de Gaulle. "Already in 1918 there was no longer such a thing as an impregnable front. Well, look at the progress made since then by tanks and aircraft. Tomorrow the concentrated action of a sufficient number of machines will be capable of smashing, in a chosen sector, any defensive barrier whatever. Once the breach is open, the Germans will have a chance of thrusting far behind our lines a fast-moving armoured mass supported by their Air Force. If we have the same, all can be repaired. If not, all will be lost."

Léon Blum told de Gaulle that decisive measures had been taken and considerable funds had been allocated for building airplanes and tanks. De Gaulle explained to Blum that the tanks were intended to accompany infantry, and the enormous sums spent did not bring about the main result, an independent select armoured corps. The money was thus scattered to the winds. "The way in which the credits allotted to the War Department are used," observed the Premier, "is the affair of M. Daladier and of General Gamelin." "No doubt," replied de Gaulle. "Allow me, though, to think that national defence is the government's responsibility."

Although de Gaulle did little else during the conversation than refute the Premier's arguments, Blum nevertheless gracefully intimated that he would like to see him in the Minister for War's entourage. Before Blum could make his offer more precise, de Gaulle sharply rejected it, pleading as his excuse the appointment to the Centre for Advanced Military Studies and the fact that he would not be able to accept any other position while he was with the Centre. He was apparently not at all sanguine about the prospect of serving under Daladier, an avowed opponent of de Gaulle's military doctrine.

The conversation between the harsh Lieutenant-Colonel and the Prime Minister was a long one. In the course of it, Blum kept picking up the phone and answered incoming calls. About a dozen times he had to interrupt the dialogue to attend to some petty parliamentary and administrative affairs. As de Gaulle took his

leave, Blum shrugged his shoulders hopelessly and said in a tired voice: "Judge if it is easy for the head of government to hold to the plan you have outlined when he cannot remain five minutes with the same idea! "

The head of government seemed to de Gaulle a helpless and shaky individual incapable of decisive action, which was in effect quite correct. Although Blum expressed his support for de Gaulle's plans, he could do absolutely nothing to overcome the resistance of their opponents. De Gaulle had long been disappointed by those at the top of the military hierarchy, realising that their blind obstinacy in defending their outdated notions was insuperable. Now that he came to know the world of high politics, he despised as ever the professional politicians with their lack of decision, fear for their career, irresponsibility and unprincipled dodginess. Some of them, however, were capable of understanding the reasonableness of his plans and even ready to support them, whereas the French army as represented by its famed military leaders rejected out of hand proposals that were clearly expedient from the military standpoint. Significantly, when Blum was interned in a Nazi prison after the defeat of France, he wrote memoirs in which he believed it to be his great error that he had not backed de Gaulle at the right time. "It is possible," he wrote, "that war could have been avoided had de Gaulle's system been implemented."

It was not implemented. De Gaulle attained nothing. No one could reproach him for the failure of the plan to build an armoured shock corps; he was doing all he could and a great deal of what he could not, in his position, according to accepted notions. He still continued the campaign with the obstinate faith of a Don Quixote, even when he had no chance of success, in the general view. It was not without reason that cartoonists pictured him riding a Rosinante. With his tall lean figure, he indeed reminded one of the traditional image of the famous knight. But the similarity was far from external only. On the one hand, he had found the right means of safeguarding the security of France, and he clearly foresaw the course of events, demonstrating an exceptional lucidity, depth of thought, and sense of realism. Yet his shrewdness in military matters and in the assessment of France's prospects in foreign policy went hand in hand with blindness, astonishing at first sight, in his failure to understand the character and meaning of the official military-political course which was an obstacle to creating an armoured corps.

He explained that course as "the blindness of a regime which went on with its absurd games", "the incredible apathy", and "a profound national renunciation". In actual fact, the "blindness", "apathy" and "renunciation" were merely the outward signs of

the deeply class character of bourgeois policy. Pétain, Weygand and other men with outdated military views expressed that policy much more faithfully than the self-opinionated obscure Lieutenant-Colonel with his novel and bold views. It was therefore natural that he proved to be isolated from the congenial social environment, in which the nationalistic spirit of the beginning of the century finally gave way to class fear that muddled reason. Perhaps de Gaulle should have fought more vigorously to gain support in the other camp, among the Leftists who now expressed the people's patriotic and antifascist attitude? Under the circumstances, that proved impossible for a person of such conservative background and views. The gap separating him from the people could only be filled through some entirely exceptional circumstances, and the time for that was not yet ripe.

De Gaulle's hopeless fight for a military reform revealed for the first time the meaning of the drama of his life. He would often be lonely and isolated even from those whom he served extremely faithfully. So far it had brought him nothing but disappointment and the bitterness of defeat. Anyone else would have turned to conformism, which would promise a successful career but certainly rule out an exceptional destiny — and there was no meaning in life for de Gaulle without that. That is why his failure in the battle for tanks did not shake his resolve to remain himself.

Back in 1934, during a trip to one of the garrisons on the eastern border, de Gaulle once stayed at the village of Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises not far from Chaumont, halfway from Paris, a place among plains and low hills with strips of forest. His attention was attracted by a rather simple two-storey house surrounded by a small park. The house and the estate belonged to an American family which wanted to sell them. Madame de Gaulle had long wanted to settle in a country place among quiet rural scenery. Besides, the clement cool climate of the Haute-Marne Department would be, according to physicians, a healthy one for the invalid Anne. De Gaulle bought the Boisserie, as the house with its park was called, and it would be his favourite residence to the end of his days. The family settled there, and he would go to Colombey whenever he could. In this quiet remote countryside, he rested from the stresses of Paris life, enjoying the spacious view, and, as always, he did a lot of thinking, reading and writing.

The fifth decade of de Gaulle's life was neither easy nor pleasant nor successful, as far as his career was concerned. His environment depressed him. In 1932, his father passed away. In 1937, Emile Mayer died while correcting the MS of de Gaulle's book *France and Her Army*. The illness of his daughter Anne remained a festering wound in his soul. His official position became more and more untenable as he criticised the official military doctrine with growing incisiveness. This struggle cost him a great deal, though it brought him a certain renown and an awareness, rather bitter, that he was doing his duty despite everything.

In 1936 he was struck off the list of officers to be promoted to the rank of colonel. Promotion came only at the end of 1937, after his assignment at the Centre for Advanced Military Studies, and that only thanks to the intercession of Paul Reynaud, who approached Daladier, the Minister for War, on this score; whereas Juin, who graduated from Saint-Cyr in the same class as de Gaulle, received in 1938 the oak leaves of a general.

A professional armoured corps remained a dream, while the war came ineluctably closer. De Gaulle was indignant about "the stupidity of the boobies who acclaimed the Munich surrender".

He was one of the few who realised how near war was. Well, one had to prepare for it! The more so that in July 1937 Colonel de Gaulle was appointed commander of the 507th Tank Regiment at Metz. He again became an exacting and punctual commander training his unit to a near perfect condition. Wearing the jacket and helmet of a tankman, the Colonel managed to squeeze his enormous frame into the narrow confines of a tank. Drivers, mechanics, gunners and radiomen were driven to the point of exhaustion, but the 507th Regiment became a model one, while de Gaulle was nicknamed "Colonel Motor". During the July 14, 1938 review, General Giraud, commanding the corps, congratulated Colonel de Gaulle. However, General Giraud, a typical martinet thinking entirely in terms of field manuals, did not care much for de Gaulle, aware of his differences with High Command. During divisional manoeuvres de Gaulle proposed on one occasion to send his tank regiment on an independent charge, which was definitely against the standing instructions. General Giraud cut him short: "As long as I live, my dear de Gaulle, you will not impose your theories here..."

In September 1939, the war began, and German armoured divisions overran Poland in two weeks, operating precisely in the spirit of those theories. As de Gaulle had foreseen, France watched indifferently the destruction of her ally, without budging an inch beyond the Maginot Line. France was said to be like an old turtle with her head hidden under the shield. However, it proved to be as fragile as egg-shell. And the Germans left at the time only a weak covering line along the western border, which could be easily shattered if France had an armoured strike force.

The day before the war began, de Gaulle was appointed commander of the armoured units of the 5th Army in Alsace, at Wangenbourg. That promotion brought de Gaulle little satisfaction. "I play my role in an atrocious mystification," he said. "...several dozens of light tanks under my command are but a speck of dust... If we do not act in time, we shall lose this war in a most miserable manner."

But no one was going to act. The French army, completely unprepared for modern war, remained in the state it was. Official personages made soothing speeches about the impenetrable fastness, the Maginot Line. That was the so-called "phoney war", during which the French High Command cherished the delusive hopes that the real war would never come at all.

In January 1940 de Gaulle came to Paris. Paul Reynaud, then France's Foreign Minister, invited him to dinner. Among the guests was Léon Blum, who asked de Gaulle about his views on future developments. "The problem," de Gaulle answered, "is whether in the spring the Germans will attack westwards to take

Paris or eastwards to reach Moscow." Léon Blum was greatly astonished: "Do you think so? The Germans attack to the east? But why should they go and lose themselves in the depths of Russian territory? Attack to the west? But what could they do against the Maginot Line?"

As for Paul Reynaud, he listened to de Gaulle without saying a word, and nodded his head in approval. The Colonel and Léon Blum silently left the building of the Ministry of Finances where the meeting had taken place. As they went into the Place du Carrousel, de Gaulle spoke to Blum: "If you can act together with Paul Reynaud, do so, I conjure you!"

De Gaulle realised that the men in Paris had a very vague idea of the military and political situation. He got a similar impression from a conversation with President Lebrun, who inspected the 5th Army, viewing with an air of confidence the obsolete tanks commanded by de Gaulle. Lebrun did not expect any surprise moves on the part of the Germans either.

In November, de Gaulle had sent to the General Staff a memorandum on the lessons to be drawn from the Wehrmacht operations in Poland. He had stressed the high effectiveness of armoured and motorised forces and the extreme instability of the Polish defence lines. The memorandum produced no effect whatever. General Dufieux merely made this slighting comment: "These conclusions should be rejected, considering the actual state of things."

In the event of war, the French armoured units would still be obliged to act in accordance with the "general instructions" of August 12, 1936. In May 1937, General Eimannsberger wrote on those instructions in the German journal *Militärwoche-Blatt*: "The tactical employment of tanks suggested in these instructions reveals a stupendous ignorance of reality."

De Gaulle took yet another step, completely unprecedented for an army colonel. On January 21, 1940, he sent a memorandum to 80 major military and political leaders, in which he again wrote of France's extremely dangerous position and of the need for immediate and vigorous measures. De Gaulle warned of the inevitability of a large-scale German offensive, in which enormous armoured and mechanised striking forces would be used supported by aircraft. He predicted that the French front could be pierced at any moment, and a complete rout would then be inevitable. He demanded that all the tanks scattered through numerous units should form a single powerful corps. De Gaulle saw the future quite clearly. Referring to the experiences of military operations in Poland, de Gaulle wrote: "The French people should not, at any price, fall into the illusion that the present military immobility might be in harmony with the nature of the present war."

The opposite is the truth. The internal-combustion engine endows modern means of destruction with such force, speed, and range that the present conflict will be marked, sooner or later, by movements, surprises, breakthroughs and pursuits the scale and rapidity of which will infinitely exceed those of the most lightning events of the past... Let us make no mistake about it! The conflict which has begun might well be the most extended, the most complex, the most violent of all those that have ravaged the earth. The political, economical, social and moral crisis from which it has issued is so profound and so ubiquitous that it is bound to end in a complete upheaval of both the condition of the peoples and the structure of states. And the obscure harmony of things is providing this revolution with the military instrument — the army of machines — exactly proportioned to its colossal dimensions. It is high time for France to draw the conclusion."

This cry from the bottom of de Gaulle's heart remained a voice in the wilderness. And in Paris, something fantastic was going on. The war with Germany was forgotten, as it were, although German invasion might be expected at any moment. True, a few things did get done. Early in 1940, one tank division was formed, at long last, equipped with the obsolete machines of the 1925 make. There were 120 such tanks in the division, whereas, according to de Gaulle's calculations fully confirmed by the practice of war, there should have been 500 of them.

There was frenetic activity in quite a different direction, however. The U.S.S.R. then fought a war against Finland. It was decided to intervene in that war on the side of Finland. Furious preparations were then begun for what was referred to as a "white Marne" (*une "Marne blanche"*)—and adventurist plan for an anti-Soviet war called so on a lunatic analogy with the 1914 battle of the Marne. 175 planes, 500 guns, 5,000 machine-guns and submachine-guns and other equipment were urgently sent to Finland, although the French army, which faced the enormous German force poised for attack, badly needed the most essential supplies. On January 8, Daladier signed an order to form a special Alpine brigade to be sent to Finland. It was carried out within 20 days. On January 19, the instructions were issued for preparing a plan for an operation aimed at destroying the Baku oil installations. General Weygand was sent to the Middle East to prepare an offensive against the Caucasus. The implementation of these grandiosely absurd plans was only prevented by the end of the Soviet-Finnish war in March 1940. The situation in France at that time is thus described by de Gaulle in his *War Memoirs*: "It must be said that some circles were more inclined to see Stalin as the enemy than Hitler. They were much more concerned with the means of striking at Russia, whether by aiding Finland, or by

bombarding Baku, or by landing at Istanbul, than with how to cope with the Reich... As for the mass of the people, it was bewildered and, feeling that nothing and nobody at the head of the state was capable of dominating events, wavered in doubt and uncertainty. Clearly a serious reverse would cause in the country a wave of astonishment and alarm which might very well sweep everything away."

On March 20, 1940, a government crisis broke out, and Daladier's cabinet resigned. After the Mannerheim Line was crushed by the Red Army and an armistice was concluded, the absurdity of the plans for an anti-Soviet war, which Daladier made the prime task of his government, became apparent. The formation of a new cabinet was entrusted to Paul Reynaud, who had won the reputation of an advocate of a serious war against Germany or, as was then said, a "French Churchill". This reputation was largely promoted by de Gaulle's ideas, which Reynaud had loudly proclaimed and made skilful use of ever since 1935.

Reynaud immediately called de Gaulle to Paris and entrusted him with writing a governmental declaration. Colonel de Gaulle swiftly wrote a brief and brilliant text, fully approved by the new Premier. For the first time de Gaulle witnessed in person the process of cabinet formation with its tissue of intrigues, machinations, mutual deception and juggling of parliamentary votes. He saw the play of interests, vanity, and selfseeking calculations. Everybody seemed to have forgotten that there was a war on, and that France was threatened by deadly danger. To de Gaulle, all of this seemed a monstrous farce.

In apportioning the ministerial portfolios, Reynaud considered in the first place the number of deputies' votes any given choice would fetch rather than the personal ability of the candidates. Thus, he gave the important post of Minister for War to Edouard Daladier, the former Premier, although their relations were very bad indeed. It was common knowledge that they could not work together in a normal way. But Reynaud needed the Radicals' votes. The new Premier appointed 11 members of that party ministers, getting in return only 33 votes out of the 116-strong Radical Party in the Chamber. To enlist the support of the extreme Right, who openly demanded a speedy peace with Hitler, he appointed Paul Baudouin, Laval's friend who was in no way an enemy of fascism, to the responsible post of director of the Indo-China Bank. In other words, to wage a war on Hitler, Reynaud made a pro-Hitlerite a minister. True, it was rumoured in the Chamber lobby that Reynaud's mistress, the Countess des Portes, had insisted on that appointment.

De Gaulle was in the public gallery of the Palais-Bourbon during the debate on the government's declaration. That session

seemed appalling to him. He thus described the debate: "After the government's statement of policy had been read out by its head to a sceptical and apathetic House, hardly anyone was to be heard in the debate but the spokesmen of those groups or men who considered themselves injured by the new coalition. The danger in which the country stood, the necessity of a national effort, the cooperation of the free world, were mentioned only to adorn claims and complaints."

Then the moment came for a vote of confidence in the new Prime Minister. Even Reynaud's own party, the Democratic Alliance, voted against! Everything got confused in this chaos. In the event, Reynaud gathered 268 votes against 156, with 111 abstaining. A majority of one vote! And even that was doubtful. De Gaulle heard ballot-rigging openly discussed in the lobby.

De Gaulle's attitude to the parliamentary system was extremely negative even before these experiences. But the scenes he witnessed in those days of stress shocked him so greatly that he would have nothing but disgust for parliament to the end of his days, revealing it even in situations where that feeling was unwarranted at all.

Apart from everything else, it became clear that his visit to Paris had been completely in vain. Paul Reynaud proposed to appoint him secretary of the newly selected War Committee intended to coordinate the country's war effort. De Gaulle believed that the committee would play a very important role, and that a great deal would depend on it. But Daladier, who took the post of Minister for War in Reynaud's cabinet, declared: "If de Gaulle comes here, I shall leave this office, go downstairs, and telephone M. Paul Reynaud to put him in my place."

De Gaulle was on the point of returning to the front when he was summoned to Château de Vincennes, the residence of General Gamelin, Commander-in-Chief. Here everything was quiet. Gamelin was a very capable military official, always courteous but extremely inactive. His communication with the army in the field was inadequate, and he spent his time theorising in the belief that the events would take precisely the course outlined beforehand. In any case, he was not, unlike Pétain or Weygand, connected with fascist conspirators who had become Hitler's fifth column. Gamelin, an old-time opponent of de Gaulle's ideas and plans, courteously informed him of the decision to appoint him commander of the 4th Armoured Division. That was a flattering appointment for a colonel. True, the division did not as yet exist: it was proposed to form it by May 15. De Gaulle expressed his gratitude and at the same time his apprehensions about the inaction of the French army and the imminent German offensive. Gamelin said: "I understand your satisfaction. As for your misgivings,

I don't believe they are justified."

The conversation with the Commander-in-Chief did nothing to dispel de Gaulle's feeling that the French army was doomed. In five weeks, his misgivings would be borne out in the most awful manner.

Early in May Gamelin ordered the best French and British troops far into Belgium. On May 10, the Germans delivered a terrible blow in the gap between the Allies' main forces and the French defensive lines. 10 armoured and 6 motorised divisions swept west, easily passing the Ardennes, which Pétain had believed to be impassable. The armoured avalanche drove everything before it, in a way very much reminiscent of what de Gaulle wrote in his *Towards a Professional Army* on the mode of action of an armoured striking force. Everything went on precisely as he had described, only it was done by the German troops and not the French. On the fourth day of the offensive the Germans crossed the French frontier. General Guderian's tank corps crossed the river Maas on May 14 and, turning right, raced for the Channel. On May 20 it reached the coast, cutting the communications of the main Allied forces which remained in Belgium. At a cost of 60,000 casualties only, the Germans captured more than a million prisoners and compelled the British Expeditionary Force to evacuate in panic.

"It can be said," de Gaulle writes, "that in a week our fate was sealed. Down the fatal slope to which a fatal error had long committed us, the Army, the state, France, were now spinning at a giddy speed. ... But battle, even if disastrous, takes a soldier out of himself. This one seized hold of me in my turn."

On April 26 de Gaulle received the order to assume command of the 4th Armoured Division then hurriedly put together out of scattered units. On May 15, Chief of General Staff General Doumenc gave him his battle orders: his division was to operate independently in the Laon area, to the north of Reims, to give the divisions of the 6th Army time to concentrate for the defence of Paris. De Gaulle asked: "But why don't you concentrate the four armoured divisions in one bloc?" Doumenc sadly replied: "Because I have only yours at my disposal... if it is formed in time."

Then de Gaulle was received by General Georges, commander of the north-eastern front, who was also in a depressed mood. "There, de Gaulle!" he said. "For you who have so long held the ideas which the enemy is putting into practice, here is the chance to act."

As he left the headquarters, de Gaulle felt that "hope was departing and that the spring was broken". He rushed to Laon and at once proceeded to study the terrain, organise his command

post, and concentrate the separate units that were coming in under his command. It all went on under the conditions of unbelievable confusion, indecision, and disorder. The life of the country was already dislocated, the roads were flooded with refugees and disorganised crowds of French soldiers. It was a rout. De Gaulle later remembered: "Then, at the sight of those bewildered people and of those soldiers in rout, at the tale, too, of that contemptuous insolence of the enemy's, I felt myself borne up by a limitless fury. Ah! It's too stupid! The war is beginning as badly as it could. Therefore it must go on. For that, the world is wide. If I live, I will fight, wherever I must, as long as I must, until the enemy is defeated and the national stain washed clean. All I have managed to do since was resolved upon that day."

That was on May 16, 1940. De Gaulle decided to start an offensive the next day with whatever forces he might have, moving north-east of Laon towards Montcornet, to cut a communications hub and prevent the enemy from approaching the positions to be taken by the 6th Army. At dawn, de Gaulle received some reinforcements — three tank battalions. Adding them to the other units, de Gaulle moved his division ahead. Pushing back the Germans, it moved 20 km forward, approaching Montcornet. But de Gaulle failed to take the town by crossing the river Serre. His division was incessantly pounded by artillery and Junkers bombers. But the task of providing a cover line for the 6th Army was carried out, and on the night of May 18 de Gaulle withdrew his force back to Laon. His division, so hastily thrown together, was acutely short on practically everything: there was no artillery cover, air support or radio communications, so that one had to use messengers, just like in old times. Despite all this, at day-break of May 19 de Gaulle again led his division in an offensive, this time north of Laon. He approached the river Serre; its opposite bank was occupied by the Germans' main force with heavy artillery. They easily destroyed French tanks attempting to approach the crossings. The river could not be crossed without the support of artillery, aircraft, and infantry. De Gaulle's division faced the flank of General Guderian's tank corps which turned towards the sea after breaking through the French front. "During those difficult hours I could not help imagining what the mechanized army of which I had so long dreamed could have done. If it had been there that day... the advance of the Panzer divisions would have been halted instantly, serious confusion caused in their rear... But there were only very poor resources to the North of Laon."

Fate brought de Gaulle nearly face to face with General Guderian, the German enthusiast of massive tank operations. He had written the book *Attention, Tanks!* a German version, as

it were, and quite an independent one, of de Gaulle's *Towards a Professional Army*. Thus a kind of personal duel was possible between the two admirers of tanks. Alas, this kind of single combat, of which de Gaulle had dreamt so much, was out of the question. His rapier was too short to prevent Hitler to thrust the German sword in the very heart of France.

In his *Memoirs of a Soldier (Erinnerungen eines Soldaten)*, General Guderian writes: "We were informed of the presence of the 4th armoured division of Colonel de Gaulle, which made itself felt from the 16th of May... In the following days, de Gaulle was intent on a rendez-vous and on the 19th succeeded in advancing, with several isolated tanks, to within two kilometres of my command post... I lived through several hours of uncertainty..."

German tanks, self-propelled mountings and infantry, supported by artillery and aircraft, crossed the river Serre and attacked de Gaulle's division. In the afternoon, when the 6th Army had been deployed, de Gaulle received an order to withdraw. Fighting all the way and suffering heavy losses, de Gaulle retreated towards Laon and spent the night of the 19th near it. On the morning of the 20th, he led his division further south, fighting off the German units on the offensive.

De Gaulle's actions in the battles near Laon could not, of course, make a great impact on the course of events. It may be said, however, that in his capacity of divisional commander de Gaulle rose splendidly to the occasion. It was simply impossible to do more. The enemy's testimony is of considerable interest. In his fundamental *History of the Second World War (Geschichte des zweiten Weltkriegs)*, the German General Tippleskirch writes: "Gen. de Gaulle's attack near Laon was the only attempt to mount an offensive from the south against the German breakthrough."

After the retreat, the division moved west on the 22nd of May to new battles. In five days, it covered 180 km and took the positions south-east of the town of Abbeville on the Somme, near the Channel. Using Abbeville as their stronghold, the Germans were building up a bridgehead for a further offensive. De Gaulle received an order to destroy the Abbeville fortifications. At six p.m. on May 27 the 20,000-strong division, with its 140 tanks and six infantry battalions, supported by six artillery batteries, charged the enemy positions. At nightfall, the first defensive line fell. The Germans retreated, leaving behind a great amount of machines and other equipment. De Gaulle with his officers dined at Château d'Uppy, hurriedly evacuated by the Germans. Instead of a table-cloth, a German flag with a swastika was spread on the table. But these triumphant appointments merely stressed the tragedy inherent in the situation. They all realised that the success was strictly local, a mere fluke against the gloomy back-

ground of France's defeat.

At dawn on May 28, the day when de Gaulle was promoted to Brigadier-General, the 4th Division resumed the offensive. De Gaulle's troops were under heavy artillery fire from the right bank of the Somme and continuous air bombardment. Some forty tanks were lost, as well as many hundreds of men. "But all the same," de Gaulle recalls, "an atmosphere of victory hovered over the battlefield. Everyone held his head high. The wounded were smiling. The guns fired gaily. Before us, in a pitched battle, the Germans had retired." De Gaulle's division pushed the Germans back some five kilometres and now stood at a distance of seven kilometres from Abbeville.

On May 29, at 4 a.m., de Gaulle led his division in an assault on the Mont Caubert eminence dominating the Abbeville area. The slope was taken at the cost of many casualties, but the ridge remained in German hands. True, two German counterattacks were beaten off. In three days of heavy fighting the division pushed the enemy back some 14 km. The Germans now had only a fourth of the original area of the Abbeville bridgehead. But the division's losses were terrible. Only 34 tanks remained in commission.

In all these battles de Gaulle behaved in strict accordance with the rules of conduct of a military leader which he had laid down in his book *Towards a Professional Army*. That means that he did not sit it out at his command post but was continually in the focus of the battle. Wearing a private tankman's jacket without insignia, a cigarette ever burning in his mouth, never cowering under enemy fire, he could be seen from all points of the battlefield. Cool and calm, the General directed the battle, fully realising its meaninglessness. In his memoirs, de Gaulle writes: "Alas! In the course of the Battle of France, what other ground had been or would be won, except this strip fourteen kilometres deep?"

On June 1, 1940, de Gaulle came to Château de Montry, to the new Commander-in-Chief, General Weygand, who replaced Gamelin relieved of his post on May 20. The vigorous little general with the thin line of firmly compressed lips, whom de Gaulle had known since the 1920 Polish campaign, seemed to be worried. He congratulated de Gaulle on the success of his Abbeville operation and asked his opinion about the best way to use the 1,200 modern tanks that the French still had. De Gaulle suggested concentrating them in two strike forces that could deliver effective blows against the attacking Germans. But Weygand was not enthusiastic about the plan. Pointing out that the German divisions outnumbered the French two to one, he declared the situation to be hopeless. The General then listed a number of completely impossible conditions that might provide a chance for success. Then Weygand added: "If not...", and fell silent, unwilling to speak

aloud the word "capitulation". But de Gaulle saw what he meant. As he left Weygand, he felt depressed and indignant that Weygand, who never had any command experience, had been chosen "for the taking of the greatest risk that had ever occurred in our military history".

In his memoirs de Gaulle discusses in detail Weygand's shortcomings as a military leader, his lack of decision, independence, zeal, etc. But he fails to mention one thing that was in fact of the greatest significance — Weygand's hatred for the people and his inclination towards fascism, his pathological fear of the revolution. Weygand therefore preferred to betray France to her enemy rather than allow the democratic and revolutionary forces to assume leadership in the struggle against fascism. And such a development was quite probable. Together with Pétain, who was included on May 18 in the Reynaud cabinet, Weygand endeavoured to avert such a course of events even at the price of disgraceful capitulation and loss of independence by France.

On June 5, the Germans resumed their offensive. Reynaud again reshuffled his cabinet, and the positions of the defeatist party became consolidated still more. Yet the dodgy Reynaud also wanted to have in his cabinet adherents of the opposite trend — just in case. He therefore appointed General de Gaulle Under-secretary of State for War. De Gaulle was informed of it by the Inspector of the Armoured Forces General Delestraint, who heard the announcement on the radio. On receiving the official telegram confirming the appointment, de Gaulle left immediately for Paris.

Significantly, de Gaulle's appointment to an inconsequential post in the cabinet was nevertheless commented on even in the foreign press. The *Times* wrote on that occasion: "From the military point of view, the most interesting of the changes made by Mr. Reynaud is the appointment of General de Gaulle as his assistant in the Ministry of National Defence. ...General de Gaulle came to the notice of the French military world a few years ago by his books... Rather aggressively 'right wing', intensely theoretical, an almost fanatical apostle of the mass employment of armoured vehicles, he is also clear-minded, lucid, and a man of action as well as a man of dreams and abstract ideas."

It was night when de Gaulle, arriving at the capital, came to the War Ministry in the Rue Saint-Dominique where the Prime Minister slept. The diminutive Reynaud wearing flowery pyjamas and huge de Gaulle in the leather uniform of a tankman talked nearly until dawn.

The General asked Reynaud why Pétain, a prominent advocate of ending the hostilities, was made a member of the cabinet. "It's better to have him inside than out," answered Reynaud repeating the old sophism used by Jules Favre in 1870, when Rochefort

was included in the government of "national defence" which soon turned out to be a government of national betrayal. It was this last point only that proved to fit the analogy.

"I'm afraid," de Gaulle said, "you may be forced to change your opinion... you know better than anyone with what an atmosphere of abandon the government is surrounded. The Marshal and those behind him are going to have things their way from now on." The new member of the cabinet suggested his own plan for continuing the war from France's North African possessions, and expressed a readiness to work out the necessary moves. Reynaud fell in with the plan and suggested that de Gaulle should go to London as soon as possible to convince Churchill of the French government's intention to continue fighting at all costs, even outside France itself. De Gaulle was also instructed to secure continued participation of British aircraft in defending France, rearmament and return to the continent of the British troops evacuated from Dunkirk. No other measures for increasing the war effort were envisaged. In general, many strange and monstrous things happened in those fatal days in France. Defeatists and advocates of capitulation, that is to say, sheer traitors, were appointed to government posts, whereas Communists were thrown into prison. A campaign of hunting down Communists was started to divert the attention from the true "fifth column" that was active in the government itself. And that undermined still more France's ability to oppose the invader. Even in the army, every tenth soldier was a Communist. These soldiers died for France without a thought for capitulation. While the government believed the war to have been lost, the people had other ideas. After all, by June 5, the Germans had occupied only the northern edge of the country, about a fifteenth part of its territory, i.e., much less than in 1914. The working people of France justly thought that the war was only beginning. The people's enormous resources were by no means exhausted when the Germans started their march on Paris. On June 6, 1940 the leaders of the French Communist Party in the underground submitted to Reynaud's government their proposals for organising the defence of Paris by arming the people, and turning it into an impregnable fortress. The Party proposed changing the character of the war, making it a national war for independence and freedom; freeing Communist deputies and activists, as well as dozens of thousands of workers, imprisoned or interned; and immediately arresting enemy agents infesting the Chamber, the Senate, the ministries and even the General Staff. The Communist Party believed that these first measures would cause an upsurge of patriotic feeling and help to raise a national volunteer corps.

Reynaud kept this patriotic appeal a secret from the public.

His cabinet had other plans, although Reynaud himself, using de Gaulle and other patriotically-minded members of the cabinet, pretended to be in favour of continuing the war. In actual fact, by retaining Pétain in the cabinet and Weygand as Commander-in-Chief, he helped them to destroy France. These two now spoke of their intentions without constraint. On June 8 de Gaulle had another meeting with Weygand. Here is the way de Gaulle remembered the dialogue between them:

"'You see,' the Commander-in-Chief said, 'I was not mistaken when I told you, a few days ago, that the Germans would attack on the Somme on June 6. They are in fact attacking. At this moment they are crossing the river. I can't stop them.'

"'All right! They are crossing the Somme. And then?'

"'Then? The Seine and the Marne.'

"'Yes. And then?'

"'Then? But that's the end!'

"'How do you mean? The end? And the world? And the Empire?'

"General Weygand gave a despairing laugh. 'The Empire? But that's childish! As for the world, when I've been beaten here, England won't wait a week before negotiating with the Reich.'

"And, looking me in the eyes, the Commander-in-Chief added, 'Ah, if only I were sure the Germans would leave me the forces necessary for maintaining order!'

General de Gaulle, thinking it useless to argue with Weygand, stated that the Commander's views differed from the government's plans for continuing the fight. Weygand made no reply to this and politely parted from de Gaulle. Perhaps he knew the cabinet's intentions better than de Gaulle. Indeed, when de Gaulle suggested, after this conversation, to Reynaud that Weygand should be relieved of his command, since he was reconciled to the idea of defeat, the Prime Minister replied that it was premature, but a replacement should be considered.

De Gaulle himself had strong views on "keeping order". But he believed that this could be combined with continuing the war, which could only help to overcome the contradictions within French society. "The people were there," thought de Gaulle, "doomed in any case to suffer invasion, but capable of being roused by the republic to resistance, that terrible occasion for unity."

From Weygand to Reynaud, the "grave-diggers" of France were, in varying degrees naturally, convinced of the danger of war for preserving social stability. Unlike them, de Gaulle had no doubts that capitulation would weaken the positions of the ruling élite, undermine the social structure, increase the people's indignation, and give rise to a revolutionary upsurge. De Gaulle had an excellent knowledge of history; he remembered that ca-

pitulation to the Prussians in early 1871 did a great deal to bring about the Commune. In de Gaulle's view, continuing the war against the invaders might revive some form of the "sacred unity" of 1914.

De Gaulle drew up plans for transferring to North Africa all the forces left in France for continuing the war. France could muster some 500,000 men, an impressive number of Air Force units still in fighting condition, even a few hundred tanks; and, above all, its Navy, which included dozens of first-rate warships. To shift the troops and the equipment, France wanted some 50 large transport ships of 500,000 tons in all. These could only be provided by Great Britain.

On June 9, General de Gaulle, his aide-de-camp Geoffroy de Courcel, and Roland de Margerie, head of the diplomatic office of the Prime Minister, flew over to London. The sight of London on a Sunday, as yet untouched by war, was striking in its quiet and serenity, after the fighting, the panic, the smoke of fires, the whole tragic circumstances of France's defeat. On the same day, de Gaulle was received by Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister. That was their first meeting. To de Gaulle, who was taking his first steps in the political arena, Churchill looked a giant. He later thus recounted that meeting: "The impression he gave me confirmed me in my conviction that Great Britain, led by such a fighter, would certainly not flinch. Mr. Churchill seemed to me to be equal to the rudest task, provided it had also grandeur... Such were my first impressions. What followed only confirmed them."

In the days to come de Gaulle would have a great many trying experiences with this "great champion of a great enterprise and the great artist of a great history", as he referred to Churchill. He would then give vent to quite different epithets to describe the famous British leader.

As a matter of fact, de Gaulle's very first contact with Churchill brought nothing but disappointment. The British Premier was openly sceptical about the assurances of France's resolve to go on with the war. He refused outright to send the main body of the R.A.F. to help France. Promising a few trifles, Churchill let it be clearly understood that the United Kingdom could not at the moment conduct any joint military operations with France. De Gaulle's mission was thus a failure, and it could not have been anything else, since England could hardly be expected to help an ally that did not want to fight.

On the same evening, de Gaulle returned to Paris. The Bourget airfield, where his plane touched down, had just been bombed by the Germans. During the night de Gaulle went to Paul Reynaud and learnt that the Germans were continually advancing and that Paris was threatened with encirclement. De Gaulle again put for-

ward his plan for moving to North Africa, but he was listened to somewhat inattentively. There was panic and confusion in the government circles at Paris. De Gaulle writes: "...The machine of government was turning in irremediable confusion... all gave the impression of a sort of phantasmagoria without aim or effect... June 10 was a day of agony. The government was to leave Paris that evening. The retreat of the front was accelerating. Italy was declaring war. The obvious fact of collapse was now borne in on all minds. But at the top of the state the tragedy was being played through as though in a dream. At certain moments one might even have thought that a sort of terrible humour was seasoning the fall of France, as she rolled from the crest of history down to the deepest hollow of the abyss."

On June 10, at about six in the afternoon, de Gaulle was with Reynaud when Weygand literally burst into the Premier's office with the words that he had an important communication to make. Thereupon he placed on the table a memorandum to the effect that the battle had been lost and capitulation was inescapable, if "Sovietisation" were to be avoided. "But there are other prospects," de Gaulle remarked. General Weygand said mockingly, "Have you something to suggest?" "The government," de Gaulle replied sharply, "has not suggestions to make, but orders to give. I am sure it will give them." Alas, there was no one to give the orders, for de Gaulle was only an Undersecretary of State for War, while Reynaud just let things slide.

Those were the last hours that the French government spent in the capital. De Gaulle demanded that the capital should be defended and that a resolute man should be appointed garrison commander. He named General de Lattre, who had recently distinguished himself in battle, as a possible candidate. But Weygand had declared Paris to be "an open city", and Reynaud's cabinet, consenting to this, had made preparations for clearing out. The only thing that worried them was the danger of popular unrest. They were therefore in a hurry to hand over the great city to the Germans, for them to enforce "order".

On June 10, about midnight, de Gaulle and Reynaud left Paris by car. The roads were congested with refugees and retreating troops. It was dawn when they arrived at Orléans and telephoned the Commander-in-Chief at Briare. It transpired that Weygand had asked Churchill to come over immediately. "What?" de Gaulle said to Reynaud indignantly. "Are you allowing the generalissimo to invite the British Prime Minister like this, on his own authority? Don't you see that General Weygand is pursuing, not a plan of operations at all, but a policy, and that it is not yours? Is the government going to leave him still in command?" Reynaud agreed, declaring that he was relieving Weygand of his post and

going straight to his successor, General Huntziger. But when the car was brought round, the Premier changed his mind and said it would be better for de Gaulle to drive alone. Moving along congested roads in unusually thick fog, de Gaulle had great difficulty in finding Huntziger; he obtained his consent and moved to Briare, where Reynaud was waiting for Churchill. De Gaulle informed the Premier that he had accomplished the mission, but the latter gave him to understand that he no longer intended to replace Weygand.

As de Gaulle left Reynaud, de Gaulle encountered Marshal Pétain, whom he had not seen since 1938. "You're a general!" Pétain said to him. "I don't congratulate you. What good are ranks in defeat?" De Gaulle replied: "But you yourself, Monsieur le Maréchal, received your first stars during the 1914 retreat. A few days later there was the Marne." Pétain grunted, "No comparison!" Indeed, nothing could be farther from his mind than the idea of victory.

Churchill came, and three hours of useless talks ensued. Weygand insisted on discontinuing meaningless resistance. Pétain resolutely supported him, while Reynaud kept saying that France would not stop fighting, implying at the same time that he had no intention of parting from Weygand and Pétain. In reply to pleas for help Churchill stated that "if the French army could hold out till the spring of 1941, the British would have from 20 to 25 divisions to place at the disposal of the French Command, to employ anywhere". Since the destiny of France was to be sealed in the next few days, Churchill's promise, as Reynaud remarked, sounded much like an offer to a man dying of thirst in the middle of the Sahara to wait for rain. It became clear in the end that Churchill was only interested in the fate of the French Navy and French colonies after the resistance in France stopped.

They all of them then went to the salon, waiting for the table to be laid. At that moment de Gaulle approached Churchill and spoke to him. When they went in to dinner, Churchill announced loudly that he had had a most interesting conversation with de Gaulle and that the General should sit next to him. Their conversation continued. What was it about? In his memoirs, de Gaulle would write of it: "I was next to Churchill. Our conversation fortified my confidence in his strength of purpose. He himself, no doubt, went away with the feeling that de Gaulle, though without means, was no less resolute."

The last sentence, mysterious and significant, induces us to assume, in the light of subsequent events, that a most important and probably historical exchange of views took place during the dinner at Château du Muguet.

De Gaulle spent June 12 at the Château de Beauvais working on the plan of evacuation to North Africa. Finding himself alone for the first time in quite a while, de Gaulle could dwell on recent events and on the fact that the plan he was drawing up would not be needed, most likely. Finishing his work, de Gaulle went to Chissay, where Reynaud had his residence. The Premier returned at 11 p.m. after a cabinet session at Conge, to which de Gaulle was not invited.

During these four days, between June 10 and 14, no one in France knew for certain where the government was: it was actually scattered throughout the Loire valley in various castles in Touraine, sometimes dozens of miles from each other. The ministers used all sorts of unlikely means of communication, including telephone booths in the streets and at cafes. Government cars often lost their way on the unfamiliar roads. The ministers received no precise information and had no knowledge of the all-important events, i.e., of the way the fighting went on. Weygand's reports did nothing but misinform the government. One thing was clear: defeat was inevitable, and the only question was which way to take to surrender and where to strike the colours of France. The ship of state was going down in absolute darkness.

De Gaulle had to wait for Reynaud until 11 p.m. on June 12, when he came with Baudouin, an ally of Pétain and Weygand. They sat down to supper, and de Gaulle immediately began talking of the move to North Africa. But his colleagues would only discuss the government's move to Bordeaux or to Quimper in Brittany. Even before that, de Gaulle had spoken in favour of Quimper, for he supported the idea of the "Breton redoubt". The point was that the Germans would take Brittany in any case, and then the government would have to flee to England or North Africa, that is to say, it would have to continue the war. However, Pétain, Weygand and Baudouin insisted on Bordeaux. That choice would mean capitulation. On the morning of the 13th, the decision was taken to go to Bordeaux. De Gaulle's hopes for continuing the struggle disappeared before his very eyes.

He returned to the Château de Beauvais, and there he was informed by telephone that in a little while a new conference would take place at the prefecture in Tours between Reynaud and Churchill, who would again fly to France. Why had Reynaud kept this from him during the several hours that de Gaulle had spent with him, though the links with Great Britain were de Gaulle's special responsibility? He left for Tours immediately.

De Gaulle arrived when the French ministers awaited a reply to their question whether Great Britain would agree to relieve France of the obligation not to conclude a separate armistice. At last the British ministers entered, Churchill sat down in an

armchair, and there was a moment of pregnant silence. As ever with a cigar in his mouth, the British Premier said slowly and sadly, in French, that he understood the position of France, and that Great Britain would not stop fighting under any circumstances, even if it remained alone. However, he made his agreement to a separate armistice conditional on one categorical demand: that the French Navy must not be handed over to the Germans. He was immediately promised that.

De Gaulle returned to Beauvais quite crushed. The government clearly headed towards capitulation. De Gaulle decided to send in his resignation to Reynaud. At this moment, he was summoned by the Minister of the Interior Georges Mandel, who had been informed of General de Gaulle's intentions. Mandel, a former colleague of Clemenceau, was firmly in favour of continuing the war, and he advised de Gaulle, in a very grave tone of voice, to wait and see, as the events might take an unexpected turn still. "In any case," said Mandel, "we are only at the beginning of a world war. You will have great duties to fulfil, General! But with the advantage of being, in the midst of all of us, an untarnished man. Think only of what has to be done for France, and consider that, in certain circumstances, your present position may make things easier for you."

General de Gaulle decided to wait a little with his resignation, since what the experienced and intelligent politician said confirmed his own intentions and plans. So far, de Gaulle, despite his rather modest post in the cabinet, had persistently endeavoured to influence the events, trying to make Reynaud to continue the war and give up the policy leading to capitulation, which was pursued by Weygand and Pétain. There could be no more doubt but that his efforts had failed. Yet he continued to act with an even greater purposefulness and, which is particularly important, greater independence. He no longer counted on anyone. He only relied on himself.

On June 14, 1940, de Gaulle, just like the other members of the cabinet, drove or rather found his way with difficulty along the congested roads to Bordeaux. Exactly at that time Dentz, the Military Commandant of Paris, surrendered the capital to the Germans on the government's orders. The main thing was maintaining order. From the morning of June 14, the inhabitants were confined to their homes for forty-eight hours while the German troops completed their occupation of the city. The victorious troops marched in triumph through the city centre. Near the Arc de Triomphe, the Nazi generals reviewed the Wehrmacht units that had distinguished themselves in battle. Enormous flags bearing swastikas were hoisted over the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate, the ministries, the City Hall, the Arc de Triomphe, and

the Unknown Soldier's Tomb.

On June 14, in the evening, de Gaulle reached Bordeaux, where everything was in a state of mad confusion increased by German air raids. The General told Reynaud: "If you stay here, you will be submerged by the defeat. You must get to Algiers as quickly as possible. Are you — yes or no — resolved on that?" "Yes!" answered Paul Reynaud. "In that case I must go to London at once myself to arrange for the British to help us with transport. I will go tomorrow. Where shall I rejoin you?" "You will rejoin me at Algiers," replied the Premier, playing a double game as ever. And de Gaulle? He did not take seriously a single word of Reynaud's. It was decided that de Gaulle would go to Brittany to inspect the means of transportation, and then on to Great Britain.

Before leaving, de Gaulle and his aide had a hurried dinner at the restaurant of the hotel Splendid. Here he saw Pétain for the last time. He silently saluted the Marshal, and the latter just as silently shook de Gaulle's hand. During the night, on his way to Brittany, de Gaulle thought of the fate of the Marshal whom he had once valued so highly. An analogy came to his mind: Pétain acted in precisely the same way as had Thiers, who had made short work of the Commune with the Prussians' aid after France's defeat in 1870. The main cause of the fatal destiny of the 84-year old Marshal was, in de Gaulle's view, that the years had sapped his strength: "Old age is a shipwreck. That we might be spared nothing, the old age of Marshal Pétain was to identify itself with the shipwreck of France."

In Brittany, de Gaulle met prefects, admirals, and generals, surveying the area for the purposes of defence and evacuation by sea. He then went to Carantec, where his family was — his wife, his son Philippe, and the daughters Elisabeth and Anne. He spent only a few minutes with them, telling Madame de Gaulle: "Things are going badly. I am going to London; perhaps we shall continue fighting in Africa, but I rather think that it will all break down. I am warning you, that you should be ready to move at the first signal."

In the afternoon, de Gaulle was already aboard the destroyer *Milan* which was to take him to Plymouth. They put out to sea at night. De Gaulle stood silently on the bridge next to the captain, and then he suddenly asked the astonished sailor a strange question: "Would you be ready to fight under the British colours?"

Arriving in London on June 16, de Gaulle stopped at the Hyde Park Hotel. Soon he was joined by Charles Corbin, the French Ambassador in London, and Jean Monnet, owner of cognac distilleries, millionaire and initiator of all sorts of projects for the joint international activities of banks and major firms. In

the morning of that day, de Gaulle made his first independent decision without consulting the government. The SS *Pasteur* was steaming from America to Bordeaux with a cargo of weapons. General de Gaulle ordered the ship to change course for one of British ports.

Thereupon Jean Monnet propounded his plan for merging the United Kingdom and France within one state having a joint government, parliament, citizenship, army, navy, etc. It would be hard to imagine anything more contradictory to de Gaulle's view of the nation as the supreme value. However, after some consideration, de Gaulle decided to suggest this fantastic plan to Churchill, for him to propound it officially. De Gaulle did it during a lunch with Churchill at the Carlton Club. The British Premier agreed, although he did not have any faith in the scheme. Supposing it did succeed? Great Britain would then at one stroke fall into possession of France's enormous colonies and the Navy, since France, occupied by Germans, would not be able to hold on to them.

In the evening, de Gaulle telephoned Reynaud from the Premier's residence in Downing Street, dictating to Reynaud the far-reaching British scheme which the latter would have to submit for consideration to the French cabinet. Later de Gaulle explained all this as an attempt at lending Reynaud moral support in continuing the war. A strange explanation, to say the least, for Reynaud's government now faced a dilemma: they either accepted the British proposal, that is to say, handed over to Great Britain everything — the colonies, the Navy, and even the flag of France (her territory would naturally be occupied by the Germans in this case); or else accepted Pétain's and Weygand's proposal to conclude an armistice ensuring France's continued existence as a formally independent nation with its colonies and even the main part of the home territory intact. Clearly, the conditions of the second capitulation were even more favourable than those of the first! The "moral support" sharply increased the chances of Weygand and Pétain.

In the meantime, the situation remained far from clear. There was of course the agreement, in principle, that de Gaulle would remain in England if France capitulated. Later de Gaulle would admit in an interview that he and the British Premier "achieved an agreement at once, first in London, then in Briare, and afterwards in Tours". Yet nothing could be undertaken unless Reynaud's government's intentions were known. Supposing Reynaud did decide to flee to London, as he had promised? De Gaulle had to go back to Bordeaux.

At half past nine in the evening the plane landed at the Mari-gnac airfield in Bordeaux. De Gaulle was met by two subordinates

from his office, who immediately informed him of Paul Reynaud's resignation and the fact that Pétain was to form a cabinet. Everything became much clearer now, but he still had to meet Reynaud and obtain the necessary papers for the departure of his family.

Paul Reynaud, who had got rid of his responsibilities after ruining the independence, honour, and well-being of France, seemed to de Gaulle to feel greatly relieved. It made all the easier for de Gaulle to inform Reynaud of his decision to depart (or rather to flee) for London. The former Premier, who had not yet handed his powers over to Pétain, had nothing to lose, so he willingly supplied de Gaulle with a hundred thousand francs from secret funds. De Gaulle immediately sent the necessary papers to his family at Carantec that they might leave for England.

After his conversation with Reynaud, de Gaulle met the British Ambassador Sir Ronald Campbell and General Spears at the hotel Montré. De Gaulle informed the Ambassador that he was immediately leaving for London. Spears cut in, insisting that the plane which had brought de Gaulle to Bordeaux could only be used with his permission. De Gaulle later recalled: "He laid himself out trying to create the impression that the plane was at his disposal, if you know what I mean. That was sheer imposture." He had to telephone Churchill. In the end, the flight was scheduled for the next morning.

Spears was head of the Intelligence Service in France, and Churchill had given him the task of selecting and moving to France a political figure that could be used as the leader of the exiled government of free France. He naturally was aware of de Gaulle's intentions. But Spears did not quite like de Gaulle as a candidate, for he did not believe the latter had enough weight, and he foresaw the difficulties that would arise owing to the General's overbearing conduct. Holding de Gaulle in reserve, Spears was looking for a more substantial figure. That was why Spears had used every pretext to stay on in Bordeaux when de Gaulle had demanded an immediate departure after his conversation with Reynaud. Spears insisted on their leaving only on the following day. During the night Spears went to Georges Mandel, Minister of the Interior and a vigorous opponent of an armistice. Spears did his best to argue Mandel into leaving for London. Mandel agreed in principle, but he did not want his departure to look like flight, so he promised the General to get to England under his own steam in a few days.

As for de Gaulle, he had to spend a long and troubled night at Bordeaux. He had to exercise extreme caution, as Pétain and Weygand, now already in power, would hardly let him leave for London. Fearing an arrest, he even thought of spending the night aboard a British cruiser. At midnight he came to the university,

where his office was accommodated. De Gaulle did not sleep all night, deep in thought about his decision. He was burning the bridges connecting him with the past, and intended to act in contravention of the traditions and norms accepted among men of his origin and background. The next day he would be called a turncoat, a deserter, a rebel. But his hopes were for history: history would pronounce the ultimate verdict. It would all depend on who would win the world war. He was convinced of the inevitability of Germany's defeat and the victory of Great Britain, which would be joined by America and Russia. In the gloom of the night, de Gaulle stood with one of his subordinates between the columns of the prefecture of Bordeaux. Suddenly he said with great confidence, as if he were talking to himself: "Well, it is clear that the Germans have lost the war. We must take up the battle again! "

Morning came, at last. De Gaulle, Lieutenant de Courcel, and General Spears arrived at the airfield. The last minutes on the French soil were very tense. But soon the plane was in the air. Had de Gaulle stayed a few hours longer, his whole destiny might have been different. On being installed as Minister for War, Weygand asked, first of all, where de Gaulle was. He became enraged when he learned that the General had flown to London. Weygand issued an order for his arrest, but the plane had already crossed the Channel.

"We flew over La Rochelle and Rochefort," de Gaulle wrote later. "Ships set on fire by German aircraft were burning in these ports. We passed over Paimpont, where my mother lay very ill. The forest was all smoking with the munition dumps which were being destroyed there. After a stop at Jersey, we reached London in the early afternoon. ... I seemed to myself, alone as I was and deprived of everything, like a man on the shore of an ocean, proposing to swim across."

De Gaulle arrived in London two hours after Bordeaux Radio transmitted Marshal Pétain's speech: "It is with a pain in my heart that I am telling you today that it is necessary to cease fighting. This night I addressed myself directly to the adversary, asking him if he is ready to seek for an end of hostilities between us soldiers, after a fight and in honour."

That was the most shameful capitulation in the history of France. The senile Marshal, who was "quite lucid", as his admirers witnessed in their delight, several hours a day, particularly in the morning, told the soldiers to drop their arms and flee from the battlefield at a time when the enemy was still advancing and no agreement had been signed on the conditions of the cease-fire. This decrepit old man is said to have confessed to Laval: "What I have really loved in my life are two things: infantry and love-making." It is hardly surprising that he threw France so nonchalantly at the feet of Hitler, who wrote in *Mein Kampf* that France had to be destroyed.

There could be no more hesitation for de Gaulle. He was finally confirmed in his decision to reject the principle of discipline, subordination and respect for the lawfully established hierarchy, that is, everything that had been the basis of stability and solidity of the French state. De Gaulle followed the dictates of his conscience, which told him that all those things had become a fiction. Earlier, he had believed his duty to be to serve the men who were the carriers of the state's will, whereas now he thought that his duty lay in insubordination. The man who had believed, since his youth, that "the interest of life consisted in one day rendering (France) some signal service", and that one day he "would have occasion to do so", finally heard the call of destiny when he was nearly fifty. He proved to be the only French general and the only member of the last lawful government to condemn the betrayal openly, decisively, and irrevocably, and to start fighting against the traitors.

No criticism of de Gaulle, however biased, no critical analysis of his actions and their motives can obscure the fact that, for a person of his origin, education, environment, and the pre-

judices of that environment, he had performed an outstanding feat which immediately made him an extraordinary personality. He did not, of course, renounce his class, his social milieu and its interests. He merely showed an exceptionally deep and shrewd understanding of those interests. He also found an adequate form of combining those interests with the national ones, whereas men very close to him in nature and spirit in their confusion entirely gave up the national interests in order to retain the dominant position of their class, thus merely creating an even greater threat to that dominant position.

The deep essence of de Gaulle's behaviour was obscured by a most complex disarray of circumstances, accidents, calculations, and contradictions. In their practical everyday shape his actions were rather remote from those exalted romantic sentences in which he clothed them in his speeches and later in *War Memoirs*. Much more obviously, they were indicative of cold-blooded calculation, cynicism, intrigues, personal pretensions, compromises that were far from principled, and, most importantly, class bias. Despite all this, against the background of the deep moral degradation of Vichy, de Gaulle's activities were seen by the majority of the French people as a kind of rehabilitation of the class he represented. The possibility was thus created for de Gaulle's unprecedented rise to power, extraordinary authority and influence. Yet none of this came to him of itself. He had to exercise great courage, patience, self-control, effort, persistence, and purposefulness. The self-assurance with which he took in his lonely hands France's national flag at first seemed an absurd tragicomedy to many. But it assumed quite a different significance after he had carried that flag through the storm of fighting, hardships, obstruction, misunderstanding and animosity.

Charles de Gaulle had been prepared for the role he intended to play by his entire career and his most prominent traits; his original and strong character had asserted itself in everything, from the first indications of adolescent self-assurance and naive belief in his lucky star to his profound faith in his ability to be the man of action whose portrait he drew in his book *The Edge of the Sword*. This character had expressed itself in the many years of fighting against the official military doctrine, in the rejection of primitive conformism and a mediocre career, and in the ability to disregard the transient personal successes for the sake of an uncertain chance of advancing towards the peak of power and action. Such personal qualities as prudent courage, breadth of vision, self-assurance, a cold, sober mind that went hand in hand with ecstatic zeal for grandiose action, made him exceptionally suitable for defending the interests of the French bourgeoisie at one of the most critical moments in its history. Winston Chur-

chill, an outstanding leader of British imperialism, grasped this with his sophisticated mind and rare instinct. During the meeting at Tours, he said of de Gaulle: "That is the *Connétable* of France!" He ignored the opinions of the high-ranking officials of the Foreign Office and the Intelligence Service, whose reception of de Gaulle was far from warm. They did not want to aggravate the relations with the Bordeaux government, and they believed that, if they were to form a French government in exile, the materials used should be more substantial. They had got into the habit of dealing with "lawful" exiled governments, quite a few of which now resided in London hotels. The obscure French general with rather strange manners was entirely unlike the familiar courteous French ministers of the ordinary type. They preferred to deal with more agreeable partners. Such candidates as Mandel, Reynaud, Daladier, the French Governor of Morocco Noguès, Admiral Darlan and others were much more highly thought of.

Fate disposed of de Gaulle's rivals. Various reasons prevented all of the major French leaders from coming over to London, while most of them simply came to believe in the inevitability of Hitler's victory. They all lacked decisiveness, to say nothing of adventurous and romantic inclinations towards risky experiments. They were too unprincipled and short-sighted to see the events in perspective. With their habits for "normal" political activity, they were cowardly. Here, the future held something far out of the ordinary in store, and even a trace of stagnation or routine might bring to naught all efforts at creating a new and independent France opposed to Pétain's.

Unlike his subordinates, Churchill realised full well what a rare find de Gaulle, with his immaculate reputation, was for British policy. While Spears continued to regard de Gaulle as a kind of quartermaster for a Mandel-Reynaud cabinet, Churchill considered it advisable to give de Gaulle a role of his own, as a test. On June 17, 1940, he received de Gaulle in the afternoon at 10 Downing Street and gave his permission for de Gaulle to raise his flag, using the powerful BBC transmitters.

During the morning of June 18, 1940, de Gaulle wrote the text of his speech. And at eight in the evening he sat before a microphone reading the appeal written in his bold hand. At first his voice sounded dull but firm, then somewhat tense and hesitant, but from beginning to end it was strangely rhythmical and minatory:

"The leaders who, for many years past, have been at the head of the French armed forces, have set up a government. Alleging the defeat of our armies, this government has entered into negotiations with the enemy with a view to bringing about a cessation of hostilities... But has the last word been said? Must we abandon

all hope? Is our defeat final and irremediable? To those questions I answer — No! .. France does not stand alone. She is not isolated... This war is not limited to our unfortunate country. The outcome of the struggle has not been decided by the Battle of France. This is a world war... Today we are crushed by the sheer weight of mechanized force hurled against us, but we can still look at a future in which even greater mechanized force will bring us victory... I, General de Gaulle, now in London, call on all French officers and men who are at present on British soil... I call on all engineers and skilled workmen from the armaments factories who are at present on British soil ... to get in touch with me. Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not and shall not die."

The legendary appeal of June 18, 1940 marks a most important boundary in de Gaulle's life. It rounds off the career of an officer and begins that of a state leader. "As the irrevocable words flew out upon their way," recalls de Gaulle, "I felt within myself a life coming to an end — the life I had lived within the framework of a solid France and an indivisible army. At the age of forty-nine I was entering upon adventure, like a man thrown by fate outside all terms of reference."

Very few Frenchmen heard de Gaulle's speech. In its content it did not look like a political programme, and it assumed all its significance in retrospect, owing to the events that followed. The appeal to the Frenchmen in Great Britain carried no message to the population of France itself, which could only follow the development of the world war and hope. De Gaulle merely touched in passing on the causes of France's defeat and all but passed in silence over the policy of Pétain's government. All of this was understandable, for at that very moment when de Gaulle's speech was transmitted, the armistice negotiations were only beginning. The uncertainty of the position of France and of de Gaulle himself was reflected in this five-minute speech. Its primary significance lay in that a man made himself heard, saying in French to the French that the destiny of their country was still in balance. The MS text of the June 18 appeal contains this sentence: "France has lost a battle! But France has not lost the war!" For some reason de Gaulle did not read it before the microphone, and it only appeared in the text of the appeal printed as a leaflet that was pasted up on the walls in the British capital and later scattered over France from planes. And it is that sentence that went to the heart of the matter in a particularly striking way. In any case, the word "resistance" sounded for the first time there. Although that was just an expression, and one in a very special meaning, it carried the sense that soon came to express the very purpose of the existence of France and its people.

Already in his second speech, on June 19, de Gaulle explained

his intentions in a more precise and comprehensive appeal.

"Faced by the bewilderment of my countrymen, by the disintegration of a government in thrall to the enemy, by the fact that the institutions of my country are incapable, at the moment, of functioning, I, General de Gaulle, a French soldier and military leader, realise that I now speak for France.

"In the name of France, I make the following solemn declaration:

"It is the bounden duty of all Frenchmen who still bear arms to continue the struggle. For them to lay down their arms, to evacuate any position of military importance, or agree to hand over any part of French territory, however small, to enemy control, would be a crime against our country...

"Soldiers of France, wherever you may be, arise! "

On June 22, when de Gaulle already knew the humiliating conditions of the armistice, he formulated his principles of Resistance: "Now, a great many Frenchmen refuse to accept either capitulation or slavery, for reasons which are called: honour, common sense, and the higher interests of the country. I say honour, for France has undertaken not to lay down arms save in agreement with her Allies... I say common sense, for it is absurd to consider the struggle as lost... I say the higher interests of the country, for this is not a Franco-German war to be decided by a single battle. This is a world war."

On June 24, he made a solemn promise that a day would come when the French army, together with its allies, would restore the country's greatness.

Thus, a few things were now said much more clearly. De Gaulle called on French soldiers to fight wherever they might be. He accused Pétain's government of treason. All of this is set in a magnificent ornament of exciting and grandiose, if rather vague, words like honour, the country, grandeur, duty, etc.

De Gaulle often referred to himself, speaking confidently and firmly on behalf of France. The appeal to close ranks round him had a note of epic pathos to it, strongly reminding one of the cries of the *connétables* and other military leaders of the feudal times who led their vassals and soldiers into battle shouting, "Follow me, follow Valois!" or "Follow me, follow Chatillon!" Later, when absolutism gained strength, these historically precise formulas were replaced by the motto, "The King!" De Gaulle did not see any mediators between himself and the nation.

This unusual tone was in sharp contrast with the assumed modesty of contemporary political figures who believed it to be good form to posture as the nation's servants. Usually these mannerisms concealed the excessive vanity of an upstart. General de Gaulle did not stoop to this sort of hypocrisy, boldly assuming

the functions of a leader and ruler endowed with authority by destiny and providence itself. This manner, naturally, appeared shocking, particularly in those days when the lanky French general walked the streets of London and no one paid any attention to him. There were too many military leaders, presidents and kings in exile there at that time, and many of them bore much better known names.

Yet this man, who often had to travel by the dark and gloomy London underground in the press of the overcrowded carriages, retained an unshakeable confidence in his special historical mission. A great deal has been written of what was referred to as de Gaulle's "pathological ambition" and of his open claims to an exceptional place in history. This feature of the General is most often condemned and ridiculed. De Gaulle's case seems to be covered, however, by Thomas Carlyle's characterisation of the ambition of an outstanding person in his book *Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*. "...There is an irrepressible tendency in every man to develop himself according to the magnitude which nature has made him of; to speak out, to act out, what nature has laid in him. This is proper, fit, inevitable; nay it is a duty and even the summary of duties for a man. The meaning of life here on earth might be defined as consisting in this: To unfold your *self*, to work what thing you have the faculty for. It is necessary for the human being, the first law of our existence... We will say therefore: 'To decide about ambition, whether it is bad or not, you have two things to take into view. Not the coveting of the place alone, but the fitness of the man for the place withal:' that is the question. Perhaps the place was *his*; perhaps he had a natural right and even obligation, to seek the place."

But how are we to reconcile de Gaulle's claims to single-handed leadership of the Resistance movement with his appeals to major political and military leaders to place themselves at the head of the movement?

Was he sincere? The argument on this point still continues, but one can say with confidence that, while acclaiming the appearance in London "of any French leader who would wish to head the permanent French Resistance movement", de Gaulle would have used every opportunity in the competition with such a figure to show who was worth what. However, not a single candidate laid claims to the leadership of a movement that did not exist. De Gaulle's only assets were his true Lieutenant de Courcel, a very limited stock of English, and the support of a single Englishman. True, that Englishman's name was Winston Churchill. And that meant that de Gaulle could rely on him only to the extent in which he believed General de Gaulle to be useful for attaining the purposes of the far-reaching policies of His Majesty's government.

In London, de Gaulle settled at first in a small three-room flat in Seymour Place, not far from Hyde Park. On June 19 Madame de Gaulle arrived with the children and the governess, Marguerite Potel. They had managed to leave Brest with the last British ship. The Polish ship berthed next to theirs was sunk right before their eyes by German planes. At first the family lived in London, but that was very inconvenient because of the invalid Anne. At 12, she had difficulty walking, and her mind and speech were those of a three-year-old. The unfortunate child was fine when she was in the family circle, but she had to be shielded from strangers. They therefore immediately rented a cottage in a suburb. The General spent all his Sundays here, playing for hours on end with the sick girl, who burst into joyous laughter hearing her father chant in a doleful bass the ancient song: "*J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière.*"

His son Philippe soon entered a nautical school, and daughter Elisabeth took a course in nursing. All weekdays de Gaulle spent in London. He took rooms at the Connaught Hotel. That was an establishment in the spirit of old England, patronised by clergymen and prim old spinsters. Here in his gloomy room de Gaulle wrote his speeches and reread the classics, listening to the explosions of German bombs and the firing of anti-aircraft guns. In the autumn of 1940, the Battle of Britain was fought in the air. On Saturdays de Gaulle took a bus to the suburbs, to his family. He knew no social life, no entertainments, theatres, clubs, etc. Apart from the contacts he needed for his cause, he had no connections and kept himself very much to himself.

His mother stayed in France. She lived in Brittany, in Paimpont, as the General's elder brother Xavier was with the army there, guarding an ammunition depot. When he was taken prisoner by the Germans, de Gaulle's mother stayed with the daughter of his brother, Geneviève de Gaulle, who was later sent by the Germans to the concentration camp at Ravensbrück. The mother learnt of her son's speech of June 18 from the village *curé*, who listened to the London radio. The old woman said: "That's how it must be. I recognise Charles, that is absolutely what he must do." De Gaulle said later: "She died several weeks later, saying that she offered her sufferings for the success of my enterprise." His mother died on July 16, 1940, and a photograph of her grave covered with flowers was soon sent to de Gaulle. Incidentally, with all his cold aloofness, the General sometimes showed unexpected sentimentality that was very strange in a man like him. For instance, he was greatly touched when, after the announcement in the newspapers that a Vichy court-martial had sentenced him to death and confiscated all his property, a dozen widows sent him their wedding rings, so that the gold might be used in

support of his cause.

But that cause advanced very slowly. In his own words, de Gaulle found himself faced with "well-nigh general abstention of Frenchmen of note" to join him. The French Ambassador to Great Britain Corbin declared that he was too old for it. Jean Monnet, the author of the project for the merging of England and France, suddenly overcome with concern for France's independence, declared that nothing should be done under the auspices of Great Britain. René Mayer, a prominent financier and political figure, announced his decision to return to France to share the fate of the Jewish people. The writer André Maurois and the journalists Henri de Kerillis and Henri Bonnet said that they would be of greater use in the U.S.A. As a result, de Gaulle had to put off the founding of the French National Committee (*le Comité national français*), which he had announced somewhat prematurely.

Pierre Cot, a prominent Radical leader, consistent antifascist, and former minister in the Popular Front government, offered de Gaulle unconditional support. De Gaulle writes of this episode: "M. Pierre Cot, overcome by what had happened, begged me to use him at no matter what task, 'even sweeping the staircase'. But he was too conspicuous for that to be desirable." This significant gesture brought into relief the Rightist character of de Gaulle's political line. In his struggle against fascism, he rejected the support of its most consistent opponents.

The history of the organisation which de Gaulle built up in London, in the cramped space of St. Stephen's House on the Thames embankment furnished with only a few chairs and tables, is very involved and contradictory. There were quite a few legends woven into that history. According to one of them, the first man to answer de Gaulle's appeal was a worker from one of France's car plants. His name is not mentioned in the numerous historical works concerned with the emergence of Free France. However, there are precise data about the first colleagues of de Gaulle, who were little known at the time; and the data are rather curious. The point is that their political and social background was strangely reminiscent of the social images of Vichy collaborators.

It will not seem strange, however, if we take into account the social background and spiritual mould of the Free French leader himself; no more astounding, at any rate, than the theoretician of "integral nationalism" Charles Maurras becoming the principal Vichy ideologist; and Maurras' ideas were very near to de Gaulle. It was Maurras who had declared the defeat of France to be a "divine surprise". The ideological weaponry of Vichy embraced such figures as Joan of Arc, Maurice Barrès and Charles Péguy. Not Bergson, though — he was a Jew. The pseudonationalist ideology of Vichy was a monstrous and unnatural distortion

of the ideas of de Gaulle himself, who always suited patriotic actions to patriotic words. Fearing, as it were, that the de Gaulle movement might be taken for a phenomenon alien to France in the competition with Vichy, he endeavoured to limit his environment to men of the old Third Republic political background, though that political structure had disintegrated even before its official liquidation.

True, when the democratic and revolutionary nature of Resistance in France itself became clearer, Free France in London moved to the Left. Prominent Socialists appeared here, and towards the end even Communists. But that was a later graft on de Gaulle's tree, one that never became truly a part of it.

There were many honest and sincere patriots in de Gaulle's original entourage in London. Yet the scene was dominated by men of quite a definite social and political background, who, taken together, reproduced as it were the structure of the ruling upper classes of prewar France, embodying the continuity between the Resistance movement in London and the system of the Third Republic.

A direct representative of the old regime was Gaston Palewski, who was in charge of the political affairs of Free France. That forty-year-old foppishly dressed gentleman was de Gaulle's old acquaintance. Paul Reynaud's former head of administration, he had presented the Lieutenant-Colonel to his chief back in 1934. Coming like himself from a respectable bourgeois family, he had close ties with financial circles and some firm connections of long standing in London. Henri Dewavrin, who took for his pseudonym the name of the Paris underground station Passy, represented prewar fascist organisations: he was once a member of the terrorist *cagoulard* squads which received money and weapons from German Nazis and Italian Fascists. He came from a family of textile manufacturers in the north of France, and there were bankers among his relatives. He joined de Gaulle as a captain and soon became a lieutenant-colonel, heading the Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action (*Bureau Central de Renseignement et d'Action*) which was in charge of the whole of Free France's operations.

The Catholic Church also had its men among the Free French, although its official hierarchy supported, without reservations, the Pétain regime. De Gaulle's naval headquarters became the Catholics' bridgehead. Thierry d'Argenlieu, then Lieutenant commander, and later Admiral, was a fervent adherent of the apostolic Roman Catholic Church. That former monk (*le père Louis* in religion) took a portable altar with him wherever he travelled. At his suggestion, Free France adopted the cross of Lorraine, a medieval Christian and heraldic symbol, as its emblem. The

future Admiral Auboyneau represented the Dominican order. Maurice Schumann, who was in charge of information in London, was linked with Leftist Catholic organisations.

The officer corps of the French army was, naturally, represented especially well. Probably the most prominent figure among all who joined de Gaulle from the outset was General Catroux, Governor of Indochina, once de Gaulle's fellow prisoner at the Ingolstadt camp. It is interesting that in September 1940 the British, in the absence of de Gaulle who went to Africa, offered Catroux de Gaulle's place. They wanted to replace a Brigadier-General (and unconfirmed in that rank) by a General of the Army who was, unlike de Gaulle, of an agreeable disposition. But Catroux rejected the offer and told the story to de Gaulle. Among other prominent military figures was Admiral Muselier, who joined de Gaulle because of a conflict with Admiral Darlan, the Vichy Fleet Commander. General Legentilhomme, Commander of the French force in Somalia, also joined de Gaulle. But on the whole very few officers and fewer generals responded to de Gaulle's appeal in the first few weeks after June 18. "To begin with, I had only a very small number of officers, nearly all subalterns," wrote de Gaulle.

La Gorce, de Gaulle's well-known biographer, writes of the Free French that, through opposing the Vichy government, "the Resistance assumed a revolutionary character". This is not borne out by the facts. Resistance of truly revolutionary character emerged in France, amongst the people of France. On July 10, 1940, the leaders of the Communist Party Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos appealed to the people to unite in the struggle for the independence and revival of the country.

Thus we have here officers and journalists, scholars and monks, *cagoulards* and Left Catholics, officers of the Foreign Legion and officials of the state apparatus; de Gaulle willingly accepted anyone who volunteered to serve with the Free French, except men of extreme Left-wing convictions. The single unconditional requirement was personal loyalty to the General. He had no preference for any one political trend or social category. He used them all, while remaining independent from them. During his stay in London, de Gaulle revealed for the first time his exceptional ability for using all sorts of persons, often incompatible with one another, without forgoing any of his interests. That is one of those striking qualities which largely explain the whole of de Gaulle's legendary career.

As for the men of de Gaulle's immediate entourage during the first weeks of the existence of the Free French in London, most of them joined him for reasons that had nothing to do with their personal loyalty to the General. Nearly all of them had known

nothing of him before, and they would have joined any other leader that might be in his place. They simply shared de Gaulle's conviction that Germany would inevitably be defeated. And de Gaulle kept reminding everyone of the fact. On June 30, 1940, in a conversation with Maurice Schumann who had just arrived in London, de Gaulle said: "I believe that Russia will enter the war before America, but they will both enter it, for sure... Hitler thinks of the Ukraine. He will not resist the temptation to decide the fate of Russia, and that will be the beginning of the end... In short, the war is a terrible problem, but one that is solved. It remains for us to bring all of France to the good side."

De Gaulle arranged all his practical activities in accordance with this extraordinary intuition about the historical perspective. "To bring all of France" to the winning side, de Gaulle worked out and patiently implemented a policy that appeared extremely eccentric but was actually very shrewd and far-reaching. Unlike many governments in exile, he did not want to await passively Germany's defeat. He did everything he could to be among the winners, those who would in future have the right to decide the destiny of the world. To achieve that end, he endeavoured to draw to his side as many Frenchmen as he could, to build up the armed forces of the Free French, to capture the colonial territories for his bases, and to win the support and respect of the great powers. Those were the principal directions of his policy intended to restore France to the position of a great power. In striving towards that great goal, he could rely only on a handful of oddly assorted followers and Churchill's very inconstant support. Even the large map of France in de Gaulle's office in London was in English.

On June 22, de Gaulle announced the formation of the Committee of the Free French, and on June 28, something more important took place: a communiqué was published in London to the effect that "His Majesty's Government recognize General de Gaulle as leader of all free Frenchmen, wherever they may be, who rally to him in support of the Allied cause."

De Gaulle immediately entered upon negotiations in which he tried to commit Great Britain to more concrete obligations and promises. An agreement was signed on August 7, 1940, after a lengthy and rather acrimonious debate. The government of Great Britain promised to ensure "the integral restoration of the independence and greatness of France" after victory. But de Gaulle failed to obtain any obligations as to the territorial integrity of France and her possessions. In a secret memorandum to Churchill, de Gaulle wrote on this point with regret: "I hope that circumstances will one day permit the British government to consider these questions with less reserve."

De Gaulle retained the supreme command of the French forces, recognising only the "general directives" of the British government. The expenses for the maintenance of these forces would be defrayed by England, but it was merely an advance that was repaid already during the war. Although the agreement of August 7 enabled the Vichy propaganda to brand de Gaulle as a "British agent", it created a semblance of legality for the existence of the Free French as an embryo of the state. From the legal viewpoint, the Free French committee became a "partial government *de facto*".

But this opinion was formed only later, while late in June 1940 reports about de Gaulle in the back pages of newspapers caused nothing but puzzlement. Churchill told Spears, annoyed: "De Gaulle is unknown on the international scene. We must make him known." In reply General Spears asked for £1,000, promising that in six months all the newspapers of the world would make the name familiar. Churchill gave him £500, and Spears engaged Richmond Temple, a publicity agent, who sent a photographer to de Gaulle. The General was vexed to see him. "They are going to launch me like a new brand of soap," said he to his colleagues. He nevertheless consented to this publicity campaign, for it would be good for the "partial government", which was yet to get hold of the essentials — a population, a territory, and, of course, an army, for there was a war on. De Gaulle made desperate efforts to knock together a semblance of armed forces out of the French troops that had found their way to England. There were some remnants of the troops evacuated along with the British from Dunkirk and units of the French Foreign Legion there; French naval and merchant ships were berthed at British ports, and wounded French were at British hospitals. Not all of them joined de Gaulle — far from that. Thus, only 200 of the 2,000 wounded came to serve with him. Yet, a kind of embryo of the French armed forces was brought into being. De Gaulle had a Navy of his own: one mine-sweeper and two submarines. On July 14, the French national day, the French units staged a parade. On July 21, several French pilots took part in the bombing of the Ruhr. In the first three months, the number of the Free French troops rose to 7,000. That was, of course, an infinitesimal force when measured against the gigantic scale of events.

France's colonial possessions might provide extensive territory and an inexhaustible source of manpower and material resources. De Gaulle counted on them more than on anything else. As early as June 24, on the day following Pétain's traitorous capitulation, de Gaulle called on the "proconsuls" — the commanders of the French forces and governors of the French colonies — to join the Free French. Only two of them responded, General Koenig

and General Legentilhomme. But they failed to sway in de Gaulle's favour the territories they ruled, Indochina and Somalia, and the latter remained in Vichy's power. De Gaulle sent his most capable aides to the colonies, he started a propaganda campaign, and finally himself went to Africa. By strenuous effort, helped at times by lucky chance, de Gaulle gained at last his own territory. The main parts of Equatorial Africa — Chad, French Cameroon, and the Middle Congo — took the side of the Free French. To these were added the French possessions in Oceania and the small territories that France had in India. But the Vichy government still held sway over the principal possessions of France: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, the Levant countries, the French West Africa, and Madagascar.

Again de Gaulle found himself in a paradoxical situation that was not unlike his position and activity before the war. Then he had had to fight against the French General Staff to achieve France's preparedness for a war with Germany. Now, in his fight against the Vichy government, his ally, Great Britain, also proved to be his opponent, and not the least among his opponents was his patron Churchill.

Throughout the war, and in particular during the early existence of the Free French movement, de Gaulle's fate largely depended on Churchill. Recognising him as the "head of the Free French" did not signify, as became clear literally in the first few days, that Churchill would be ever ready to help de Gaulle. Their relations sharply fluctuated between friendship and hatred, often reaching the breaking point. The reason was that, being strongly dependent on Churchill, de Gaulle implemented an independent policy. Besides, the Anglo-French marriage of convenience brought out a complete disparity of temperament. As two strong and powerful characters came in conflict, there was no end of friction. Churchill's position was immeasurably the stronger of the two, and the awareness of this fact in no way helped him to accept de Gaulle as an equal: the bearer of a famous aristocratic name and a generally recognised major political leader, self-assured and masterful, Churchill always regarded de Gaulle as an upstart. What could a penniless obscure Brigadier-General oppose to the British might, so strikingly embodied in Churchill? Nothing but persistence, purposefulness and supercilious pride. But all this merely irritated Churchill still more. True, after the war, in retrospect, so to speak, Churchill gave his obstreperous French partner his due, recognising his qualities yet persisting in the assertion that of all the crosses he had to bear in the war, the cross of Lorraine was the heaviest. In the fourth volume of his memoirs about the Second World War Churchill wrote: "In these pages various severe statements based on events of the moment are set down about General de Gaulle,

and certainly I had continuous difficulties and many sharp antagonisms with him. There was, however, a dominant element in our relationship... I knew he was no friend of England. But I always recognized in him the spirit and conception which, across the pages of history, the word "France" would ever proclaim. I understood and admired, while I resented, his arrogant demeanour. Here he was — a refugee, an exile from his country under sentence of death, in a position entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the British Government, and also now of the United States. The Germans had conquered his country. He had no real foothold anywhere. Never mind: he defied all. Always, even when he was behaving worst, he seemed to express the personality of France — a great nation, with all its pride, authority and ambition. It was said in mockery that he thought himself the living representative of Joan of Arc... This did not seem to me as absurd as it looked."

From his first days on the British soil, de Gaulle faced an attitude of the British to his cause that apparently entirely contradicted their recognition of him as the "head of the Free French." On June 29, 1940, de Gaulle went to Trentham Park where the French troops were billeted that had come over from Norway. He succeeded in attracting several hundreds of officers and men to his side. But, as soon as he left the camp, British officers assembled the French and told them that they would become rebels against their lawful government in joining de Gaulle. On the following day, June 30, de Gaulle went to the camps of Aintree and Haydock where several thousands of French sailors were held. He was met by a British admiral who declared that he could not permit him to meet the French men as it would be "a breach of order". The head of the Free French had to withdraw empty-handed. Everywhere the British authorities preferred the French to join the British armed forces rather than de Gaulle. That was the case not only in the United Kingdom but also in Africa and in the Middle East. But the hardest blow that de Gaulle sustained came with the operation Catapult carried out by Churchill on July 3, 1940.

As early as the middle of June, when the French defence was coming apart under the hammering of the Germans, Churchill's prime worry in his negotiations with Reynaud had been the fate of the enormous French Navy yet untouched by war. If it were to fall into German hands, the destiny of Great Britain would hang by a thread. The weak British land forces would be unable to repel a German invasion of the British Isles. At that time Churchill had been assured that the Fleet would not be handed over to the Germans. That had been promised by Admiral Darlan and Marshal Pétain himself. But could one put any faith

in the promises of such men?

So the British War Cabinet decided that it would be better to destroy the French Fleet than to leave its destiny undecided. De Gaulle was told nothing of the intended operation under the code name Catapult.

On July 4 he heard on the radio that on the previous day an English fleet attacked the French squadron off the Algerian shore at Mers el-Kebir. Many French vessels, caught unawares, were sunk. The British sank the new powerful battleship *Dunkerque*. Simultaneously British troops attacked French ships in British ports and captured them. There was bloodshed here too. British ships torpedoed and seriously damaged the battleship *Richelieu* off Dakar. True, this did not at all spell the destruction of the main body of the French Navy. But who could guess the plans of the British Admiralty? Enraged and indignant, de Gaulle ordered his Naval Commander Admiral Muselier to announce to the British: "If you do not cease fire immediately, all French volunteers will depart for Pondicherry or Saint-Pierre and Miquelon." That was a reference to a small possession of France in India with a population of some 20,000, and to the islands lost in the immense space of the Atlantic, where about 5,000 French lived.

De Gaulle's initial violent reaction to England's unexpected action is easy to understand. The Vichy propaganda could now assert that Great Britain had become France's enemy, while de Gaulle was a henchman of that enemy. The situation was this: the France of Vichy was in the service of Hitler, while the France of de Gaulle served Churchill! Clearly, the flow of volunteers for the Free French would drop sharply, and de Gaulle's authority would be shaken. The General said to Colonel Passy: "These imbeciles of the English, these criminals. They shed French blood. And they find means to pour water on the mill of capitulation! "

General de Gaulle now faced the excruciating problem of having to explain these acts to France. He could not condemn Churchill's actions without reservation as enemy acts, for he was entirely dependent on him. Neither could he approve of these acts, considering the reaction of the French. Should he pretend that nothing had happened? This line of conduct de Gaulle also rejected as quite impossible, and he decided to make a special speech on the radio. For the first and last time, de Gaulle showed the text of his speech before going on the air to the British Information Minister, as his speech contained a condemnation of British actions.

On the evening of July 8, de Gaulle was at the BBC microphone. He called the attack on the French ships, though they were Vichy-controlled, an extremely regrettable event. "I shall speak

quite frankly on this subject, for the present drama is one in which the future of each country is at stake, and it is therefore imperative that men of feeling should have the courage to face facts and speak their minds. Let me, then, say here and now that there is not a single Frenchman who did not learn with grief and anger that certain vessels of the French Fleet had been sunk by our Allies. This grief and anger come from the innermost of our being." De Gaulle then condemned the attempts of the British to present everything as their military victory, which it was not, for the attack had been unprovoked. The destruction of the ships "was not the outcome of a glorious battle", said de Gaulle.

But then de Gaulle asked the French to analyse the events from the standpoint of the perspectives of war, victory, and liberation. The ships might be passed on to the enemy, who could use them against Great Britain and against the French Empire. In that case, de Gaulle declared, "they are better destroyed". Since the defeat of Great Britain would perpetuate France's subjugation by Germany, the alliance with Great Britain must not be jeopardised even in the face of that "hateful and deplorable" event. The resolve of Frenchmen, ended de Gaulle, was inflexible: to fight on to the finish.

The Catapult affair was by far not the last in the misfortunes that beset de Gaulle: it was rather the beginning. Soon he was to suffer one of the worst failures of his life. Having consolidated his positions in Equatorial Africa, de Gaulle immediately conceived a plan for extending the power of the Free French to the immense territory of the French West Africa. The key to it was Dakar, a port, fortress, and war base on the western extremity of Africa near Cape Verde Islands. That stronghold was also tempting to Churchill, for in the pitched battle for the Atlantic enemy-held Dakar was a great threat to the British communications. In 1940, from early August on, Churchill and de Gaulle several times discussed the problem of capturing Dakar. The British Premier believed that, with the aid of the Free French, control over Dakar would probably be gained without a strenuous military effort. In his turn, de Gaulle realised that, with their modest armed force, the Free French would hardly stand a chance of wresting this important foothold from the Vichy government on their own.

On August 6, in his enormous office at 10 Downing Street, Churchill outlined the plan of the tempting operation with his customary eloquence: "Dakar wakes up one morning, sad and uncertain. But behold, by the light of the rising sun, its inhabitants perceive the sea, to a great distance, covered with ships. An immense fleet! A hundred war or transport vessels! These approach slowly, addressing messages of friendship by radio to the town, to the navy, to the garrison. Some of them are flying the Trico-

lour..." All this was to be followed by talks with the Governor, who would, of course, eventually yield to de Gaulle's pressure and, Churchill concluded, "that evening he will dine with you and drink to the final victory".

On August 31, a convoy left Liverpool which included two battleships, four cruisers, one aircraft carrier, several destroyers, and many auxiliary and transport vessels flying the colours of various allied countries. De Gaulle was aboard the Dutch ship *Westerland*. He later recalled: "Out in the open, in black night, on the swell of the ocean, a poor foreign ship, with no guns, with all lights extinguished, was carrying the fortunes of France."

The carrier of the "fortunes of France", that is, de Gaulle himself, learnt midway to Dakar that seven Vichy cruisers had passed through Gibraltar and were now in those waters, and that Dakar was getting ready for a siege. Churchill decided to give up the operation, but de Gaulle insisted on going on with it "in spite of everything". During the passage General de Gaulle and the British Commander, Admiral Cunningham, became engaged in a hot dispute as to who was going to run the show. Finally the convoy reached Dakar on September 23, only to run into all kinds of unpleasantness immediately. The spectacular curtain-raiser planned by Churchill, with a powerful Allied armada appearing on the horizon, fell through. Thick fog descended on the sea, and one could not see a thing. De Gaulle made an appeal to the population of Dakar on the radio, and a launch headed for the shore carrying truce envoys, who had to hand in de Gaulle's letter to Governor Boisson, an ardent adherent of Vichy. The launch soon returned carrying two gravely wounded officers of de Gaulle, while the coast defence batteries and the battleship *Richelieu* lying out in the roadstead opened up with their guns. Seeing that the fortress was ready to offer stiff resistance, de Gaulle attempted a landing near Dakar but ran into a bit of bad luck here again. On the following day an artillery duel was fought between the British ships and the fort of Dakar, but it yielded no results. The exchange of fire continued on the third day as well, and several British ships were damaged. The whole expedition was thus an ignominious failure. The British fleet steamed off for the open sea, while a small convoy of the Free French vessels headed for Douala, the main port of Equatorial Africa where most of the territory was controlled by de Gaulle's supporters.

There was a storm of anger in London, Washington mocked at de Gaulle, and Vichy celebrated a victory. The pernicious consequences of the Mers el-Kebir seemed a trifling nuisance compared to the deplorable outcome of the Dakar operation. In the event, de Gaulle, who had raised the standard of the Resistance to the Germans, was actually fighting the French. "The days that followed

were cruel for me," writes de Gaulle. "I went through what a man must feel when an earthquake shakes his house brutally and he receives on his head the rain of tiles falling from the roof."

De Gaulle did not show his face in London until the middle of November, preferring to lick his wounds in Africa. Here he managed to restore some of his prestige by capturing Gabon. Now the Free French were in control of all French Equatorial Africa. De Gaulle worked hard, preparing his troops for direct participation in the war against Italy in Eritrea and Libya. True, in far-off London Churchill was then thinking of replacing de Gaulle by General Catroux. England began secret negotiations with Vichy. However, Catroux refused to become de Gaulle's rival, while the Vichy government entered upon active and open collaboration with Germany after Pétain's conference with Hitler of October 24 at Montoire. That created an atmosphere favourable for the Free French movement as its role as the focus for all French patriots grew. The Dakar failure was gradually forgotten, and de Gaulle was again inspired with hopes for the success of his undertaking. On October 27, at Brazzaville, he promulgated a manifesto announcing the founding of the Council of Defence of the French Empire and declaring, in impossibly self-assured tones, the goals, tasks, and forms of the activity of his movement. The decrees announced in the manifesto began with a truly royal formula: "In the name of the people and of the French Empire... We, General de Gaulle, Chief of Free Frenchmen, ... declare ..."

On November 17, 1940, he set out for England. Flying over the vast space of the African continent and the ocean, de Gaulle mused: "Harsh though the realities might be, perhaps I would be able to master them, since it was possible for me, in the phrase of Chateaubriand, 'to lead the French there by dreams'."

In the winter of 1940 London looked particularly gloomy, although the "Battle of Britain" in the air had been won. The British now suffered heavy losses from German submarine attacks; the country had always lived on overseas supplies of raw materials and foodstuffs. The U.S.A. did not join the hostilities and supplied their commodities and weapons only against British gold. Rations were reduced, and German bombing raids continued. It would appear that Churchill had his hands full without having to contend with the arrogant leader of the Free French.

Their relations had not improved. Soon after de Gaulle's arrival a new acute conflict arose. Unexpectedly, the Intelligence Service arrested Admiral Muselier, accusing him of having links with Vichy. There were, of course, good reasons for the famous British Intelligence, which, according to de Gaulle's sarcastic comment, was "a passion, quite as much as a service" with the British, to keep an eye on the men in the Free French apparatus,

which indeed teemed with shady characters with certain Vichy connections. In this particular case, however, the spy-catchers made a gaffe. De Gaulle obtained Admiral Muselier's release and later was icily condescending in accepting the apologies of Churchill and Eden.

De Gaulle also quickly put an end to all kinds of petty squabbles within his London headquarters which had arisen in the two and a half months of his absence. He stopped at once any tendencies towards being soft and yielding in the dealings with the British, towards all that he called "the natural propensity of the French to yield to foreigners and become divided".

Moreover, he pressed the "bulldog" (as Churchill was nicknamed by de Gaulle's followers) into a new significant concession. On December 24, 1940, the British cabinet officially recognised the Council of Defence of the French Empire which had been set up without consulting Churchill, who was thoroughly displeased by the *Connétable's* wilfulness.

This new act of recognition came in quite opportunely, for early in 1941 de Gaulle realised that he would soon have to grapple with the British in full earnest over the East. After occupying Greece, the Germans openly extended their tentacles to the Middle East. Hitler's agents fanned anti-British sentiment in Iraq, and a special German mission arrived in Syria at the beginning of February. De Gaulle decided that the moment had come when he could seize Syria and Lebanon, which were then French mandates. On March 14, 1941 he flew to the Middle East. Once, Major de Gaulle had been stationed in these parts, and he had been sceptical about keeping the Levant under French control. But his views had changed in the transition from being in a kind of opposition to being in a kind of power. De Gaulle wrote: "Towards the complexities of the Middle East I flew with simple ideas." To consolidate his power, he had to extend his territorial basis at any cost. He was also thinking of increasing his armed forces through leading over to his side the Vichy troops that had been concentrated in Syria and the Lebanon early in 1940, during the Soviet-Finnish campaign, for a drive on the Caucasus.

First he flew to Khartum and inspected the Free French units that had fought against the Italians: he might soon need them north of Suez. On April 1 de Gaulle arrived at Cairo, but he saw at once that any action would be premature then, and flew on to Brazzaville, while carefully monitoring the events in the Middle East. Soon after, he proposed to the British to forestall the inevitable German infiltration to the very heart of this highly important strategic area by establishing the authority of the Free French over the Levant. Both Churchill in London and General Wavell in Cairo were aware of the German danger. At the same time these colleagues of the famous Lawrence of Arabia remembered that

back in 1920 he had been ousted from the Levant by the Frenchman Gouraud. Why couldn't they, in repulsing the Germans, also supplant the French? In reply to de Gaulle's proposal, the British said that his plans were premature.

On the following day, German planes landed in Syria. The situation became grave. Hitler was reaching for the Suez Canal. An anti-British uprising broke out in Iraq; its leaders had links with Germans. This was no time for ignoring either the moral influence of the Free French or their scanty troops. That was why Churchill unexpectedly suggested that de Gaulle should go to Cairo and cope with the situation in the Levant.

De Gaulle was so touched by this gesture that he even wrote a very warm letter to Churchill, and in English. A unique occasion!

On May 20, de Gaulle telegraphed General Catroux in Cairo: "We must push for Damascus, even with a single battalion on lorries. The psychological effect will do the rest." Could he have forgotten the cruel lesson of Dakar? No, this time the British would go all out. Besides, evading this operation would be tantamount to ceding Syria and Lebanon to Great Britain. To prevent this, de Gaulle conceded the need for the French to fight the French, which he always tried to avoid at any cost.

On June 8, the British and Free French troops began the offensive. Realising that Great Britain would not miss the chance of posing as a champion of Arab independence, de Gaulle intended to announce France's desire to put an end to the mandate regime and to grant Syria and Lebanon independence. As was to be expected, the British demanded that this declaration should be made on behalf of the two countries or, at the least, that the United Kingdom should be the guarantor of the French promise. Ignoring Churchill's request, de Gaulle rejected these claims and published his own separate declaration. But that was only the beginning of a conflict of unprecedented acuteness.

After heavy fighting with Vichy forces, in which the Free French units sustained heavy losses, the Vichy commander General Dentz requested a cease-fire. The British entered into negotiations with him and, ignoring the Free French, concluded an armistice convention at Saint-Jean d'Acre. This convention, signed on July 14, the French national day, provided for complete transference of power over Syria to Great Britain. The rights of the Free French were not even mentioned there. The British Command promised not to interfere with the evacuation of the Vichy troops from the Levant.

Enraged, de Gaulle at once declared to the British, in most emphatic terms, that he did not recognise the Saint-Jean d'Acre armistice, that he ordered General Catroux to assume power over

Syria and Lebanon in the teeth of any resistance from any quarter, and that the armed forces of the Free French would no longer be controlled by the British Command. He thus ran the risk of an armed conflict with the British for the sake of keeping the "lawful" French possessions.

Great Britain then made a sham concession, concluding an additional agreement with de Gaulle's representatives to be appended to the armistice convention. De Gaulle's demands were formally complied with, and he set out for Damascus and Beirut, where his followers met him with great pomp and circumstance. And while de Gaulle made speeches, sat in conferences with Syrian political leaders, and made plans for consolidating the Free French influence in the Middle East, the British wasted no time. They behaved as if the additional agreement had not been signed at all. De Gaulle's representatives were still given no chance to establish contact with the Vichy troops and recruit them for the Free French army. The British swiftly occupied the country and vigorously fomented Arab discontent with French "colonial domination". French flags were struck and British ones hoisted instead. In the face of fresh proofs of British perfidy de Gaulle ordered his troops to defend French rights by force of arms. De Gaulle's closest colleagues were frightened by the new danger of breaking up the alliance with Great Britain and of an armed conflict with it. Explaining his position to them, de Gaulle wrote: "Our greatness and our strength consist solely in intransigence concerning the rights of France. We shall have need of this intransigence up to the Rhine, inclusive."

De Gaulle's cautious colleagues simply failed to understand the situation. Their leader's "implacable stance" was a well-calculated move in the game. He took into account the fact that Churchill, who was fighting a hard, large-scale war, would not at all welcome any new difficulties, and that, having staked his money, so to speak, on de Gaulle the year before, he was now a prisoner of his own choice and could not permit himself the luxury of simply discarding a mutinous vassal. His flirtation with Vichy in the autumn of 1940 had miscarried, for the men of Vichy firmly adhered to the policy of collaborating with Hitler. And yet he had to have some kind of key to France, even such an intractable one as de Gaulle. Besides, deep in his soul Churchill sympathised with de Gaulle, for he was also quite adamant in the defence of British imperial interests. If he had previously underrated de Gaulle's ability, who was to blame but Churchill himself?

In the event, Great Britain made concessions, and de Gaulle asserted for a while his power in Syria and Lebanon. At the last moment, he even succeeded in winning over to his side 6,000 men and 127 officers from General Dentz's force. But 25,000 troops

sailed for France, reinforcing Pétain's army. De Gaulle's firmness played a decisive role in the outcome of the fierce Franco-British conflict, when Great Britain, not Germany, seemed at times to be France's enemy. On September 1, 1941, de Gaulle returned victorious to the capital of England which he had defeated.

A year had passed since de Gaulle's June 18 appeal on the air. He had been alone then, and had had nothing to back him but the awareness of his special mission. His inspiration came from the history of France and the great heroes of her past, whose voices he heard in his imagination, like the voices that once gave strength to Joan of Arc. This is how journalist Pierre Bourdan saw him on June 19, 1940: "The features evoked first of all a medieval design. They ought to have been framed by a helmet and chin plate of mail... The interior fire was reflective, introspective; there can be no exchange except one intended and in a predetermined direction.... This man was self-willed and intractable even in his passion. There was in his eyes an abstract fire..."

And yet, besides his emotional *élan* and Bergsonian instinct, de Gaulle had also a very sober mind and ability for cold calculation and well-founded foresight. The famous journalist Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie, who met the General about a year later, painted a somewhat different image of de Gaulle, more mundane and real: "He was even taller than I had thought. His gestures were slow and heavy like his nose. His small head, his waxy face were carried by a body of uncertain architecture. His most usual gesture was to raise his forearms, while keeping his elbows close to his body; attached to a pair of frail wrists, his inert, very white, somewhat feminine hands, with the palms turned upwards, seemed to be raising all the time whole worlds of abstract burdens... He does not like men; he only loves their history, especially the history of France, of which he was 'doing' a chapter himself, writing it in his mind...."

There was perhaps more "doing" than writing of history in this first year of his long and extraordinary political career. He had achieved a great deal, he had managed to overcome failures and to gain successes. He felt at last that he was swimming in the congenial element of historical action. Yet in the history that he was "doing" and filling with sonorous phrases about France's greatness, there was little evidence of the real France which was then dragging out a miserable existence under the yoke of Nazi occupation and humiliating Vichy collaborationism.

On June 22, 1941, exactly a year after the formation of the Free French movement, an event took place which, in de Gaulle's words, "opened up the greatest hope" "for crushed France". The U.S.S.R. entered the war, fighting against Hitler's assault. De Gaulle learnt of this on June 23, when he arrived at Damascus immediately after its liberation from Vichy forces. He had long believed that the Soviet Union would inevitably become involved in the war. He therefore proclaimed without delay: "...We are very frankly with the Russians, since they are fighting the Germans." It was in this spirit that he now instructed his London representatives to conduct Free France's propaganda. Simultaneously he gave orders to inform the Soviet ambassador, on his behalf, that "the French people are with the Russians against Germany. We desire, therefore, to organise military relations with Moscow".

Thus de Gaulle unhesitatingly headed towards an alliance with the U.S.S.R. Cooperation with the Soviet Union was established much more swiftly and smoothly than with the United Kingdom and the U.S.A., for there were no points of conflict between the interests of the U.S.S.R. and France. The alliance with the U.S.S.R. became national and democratic in nature, while similar relations with the Anglo-Saxon countries did not exclude imperialist competition.

The rapprochement with Moscow was fully in keeping with the main principle of de Gaulle's political world outlook — insistence on the decisive and primary significance of the national factor as against ideological and political differences. He realised that the existence of both nations, Russian and French, was threatened by a common enemy, and the ideological and social differences receded into the background in the face of this threat. De Gaulle believed close cooperation with the U.S.S.R. to be a direct continuation of the old tradition of the Franco-Russian alliance. In his view, that alliance was now even more viable and necessary than at the end of the last century. Characteristically, de Gaulle would invariably refer to the U.S.S.R. as "Russia". This standard-bearer of the greatness of France had a deep respect

for the greatness of "eternal Russia", whatever her ideological vestments.

Unlike most Anglo-Saxon strategists, General de Gaulle had, from the very outset, a faith in the victory over Germany; he believed that it would be the Russian contribution that would be decisive for the attainment of that victory. At a time when France was often in isolation in the camp of the Western countries, an alliance with the U.S.S.R. gave de Gaulle a vital foothold for his independent policy. He wrote that the presence of Russia "in the Allied camp brought Fighting France a balancing element over against the Anglo-Saxons, of which I was determined to make use".

However, de Gaulle's policy as an ally of the U.S.S.R. was naturally affected by his immutable class positions. The same prejudices which had conditioned, for instance, his negative attitude towards the Popular Front and his unwillingness to draw the forces of the Left in the Free French movement (recall the rejection of Pierre Cot), naturally tinged his policy in regard to the U.S.S.R. De Gaulle wrote: "I had no doubt, obviously, that a victory in which the Soviets would have taken a major share might well, *ipso facto*, face the world with other perils later. These would have to be taken into account even as we fought at their side. But I considered that, before philosophizing, one must live — that is to say, win. Russia offered the chance of doing so."

General de Gaulle worked vigorously to speed the establishment of official relations with the U.S.S.R., endeavouring to obtain recognition of his organisation by Moscow at the earliest possible date. That was of enormous significance for further strengthening of the positions of the Free French as the only lawful representatives of France. De Gaulle believed that now that the U.S.S.R. had joined in the war and an alliance with it had been established, now that the authority of the Free French had been extended to Syria and Lebanon, and direct participation of the Free French in the hostilities in Africa had increased, the moment was propitious for forming a French National Committee — something that he had vainly endeavoured to achieve in the previous year to no avail.

When recognition by the Soviet Union was ensured through diplomatic channels, de Gaulle issued, on September 24, 1941, Ordinance No. 16 instituting the French National Committee under his chairmanship. The members of the Committee, or commissioners, were endowed with ministerial functions, so that in actual fact the Committee was a government.

On September 26, 1941, the Soviet Ambassador in London I. M. Maisky handed over to de Gaulle a letter which stated that the government of the U.S.S.R. recognised him as "the leader of

all the Free French", and that it was ready to render them "all-round assistance and aid in the common struggle against Hitlerite Germany" and to ensure "complete restoration of the independence and greatness of France" after victory. In his answering letter to the Soviet Ambassador General de Gaulle expressed gratitude for the recognition of his organisation, adding: "For my part, on behalf of the Free French I pledge to fight at the side of the U.S.S.R. and its allies till the final victory over the common enemy." This exchange of letters was in fact tantamount to concluding a treaty of alliance between the government of the U.S.S.R. and the French National Committee. Characteristically, the Soviet letter did not mention any reservations, whereas a similar British letter of recognition dated September 26 emphasised that the government of Great Britain could not send an accredited diplomatic representative to de Gaulle, as that would have meant recognising him as head of a sovereign state.

On September 27, General de Gaulle sent Joseph Stalin, head of the Soviet government, this telegram: "At a time when the Free French become Soviet Russia's ally in the struggle against their common enemy, permit me to express my admiration for the staunch resistance of the Russian people, as well as the courage and gallantry of its armies and their leaders. By throwing all its might against the aggressor, the U.S.S.R. has infused all the oppressed peoples with confidence in their liberation. I do not doubt that the Allies' effort will be crowned by victory due to the heroism of the Soviet armies, and that the new bonds between the Russian and the French peoples will be a cardinal element in the reconstruction of the world."

This telegram, sent by de Gaulle at a time when the Germans were rapidly cutting deep into our country and Soviet armies suffered bad reverses, clearly differed from ordinary protocol missives of this sort in its grave and even solemn tone. The telegram expressed hopes that the alliance between the two peoples would have great historical prospects, and, of course, de Gaulle's firm faith in the victory of the U.S.S.R.

De Gaulle's diplomacy became more and more Soviet-oriented. De Gaulle greatly relied on indirect Soviet support in his difficult relations with Great Britain. Striking evidence of this is furnished by a characteristic episode linked with British military operations against German and Italian forces in Libya. On October 7, 1941, de Gaulle offered Churchill and Auchinleck, the British Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, two French divisions for taking part in the offensive in Libya then in preparation. However, on November 27 the British General Staff rejected de Gaulle's offer. The British pursued, quite consciously, the policy of barring the Free French from major operations, a policy aimed at putting

a curb on their influence.

On December 9, de Gaulle invited the Soviet ambassador to a conference at which he communicated to him his intention of sending one of his divisions from Syria to fight under the Red Army command. De Gaulle made no secret of his resentment at British policy. Analysing British defeats in Libya, he said that the British command had no grasp of the modern tactics of mechanised warfare, and that it was only beginning to study that tactics. De Gaulle declared that Germany could only be defeated by the U.S.S.R., that the British were just not up to it. He assured the ambassador that, on political and military grounds, he preferred to render assistance to the Soviet Union rather than Great Britain.

Receiving a favourable Soviet reply, de Gaulle immediately informed the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that the 2nd Free French division would leave on March 15, 1942, for the Caucasus, if it was not given a chance to fight in Libya. In the end, the British requested that division to be sent to Libya.

But, of course, of prime importance for the destiny of France were the titanic battles fought on the Soviet territory; these eclipsed everything that happened in the West. In his *War Memoirs*, de Gaulle writes: "The map of the vast battle was spread out on the walls of our offices. There the gigantic effort of the Germans could be seen developing... But in December, round about Moscow, the vigorous activity of Zhukov, powerfully aided by a harsh and premature winter, checked the invader, then made him draw back. Leningrad had not fallen. Sebastopol was still holding out... In spite of the model victories of the campaigns in Poland, France, and the Balkans, this time the Führer had to offer up sacrifices to the time-honoured errors... Surprise once past, the Russians, over immense expanses, would make him pay dearly for it."

General de Gaulle was greatly impressed by the German defeat in the battle of Moscow. A prominent military authority with personal experience of the military might of Germany, he was fully competent to assess the entire significance of the battle for Moscow. On January 20, 1942, he devoted to it a whole speech on the radio. Written in the classical style characteristic of de Gaulle, with a beat to it that echoed the pace of history, this brilliant speech, imbued with a sincere feeling of admiration, is one of the most striking tributes to the greatness of the Soviet people's feat in the war with Germany.

General de Gaulle said:

"There is not a single true Frenchman who does not acclaim the Russian victory.

"The German army, almost the whole of which, since last June, has been hurled to the attack from end to end of that gi-

gantic front, provided with enormous supplies of war material, accustomed to fighting and success, and reinforced by auxiliaries fettered by ambition or terror to the destiny of the Reich, is now falling back, decimated by Russian weapons, a prey to cold, hunger, and disease...

"While the power and prestige of Germany is declining, we see the star of Russian might soaring to its zenith.

"The world can see that this nation of 175 million people is deservedly great because it knows how to fight, how to suffer and strike, and because it rose up, armed and organised itself, and its cohesion comes unshaken through the severest ordeals.

"The French people enthusiastically hail the success and rise of the Russian people, for liberation and vengeance have now become inviting probabilities for France. Every German soldier killed or frozen to death in Russia, every German gun, plane, or tank destroyed in the Leningrad, Moscow, or Sebastopol sectors, gives France another chance to rise and conquer...

"...The incontestable advent of Russia to the front rank of to-morrow's victors affords Europe and the world a guarantee of stability which France, more than any other Power, has good reason to welcome. Unfortunately for us all, for centuries past Franco-Russian alliance has too often been thwarted or counteracted by intrigues or misunderstandings. Yet it remains a necessity which is conspicuous at every turning-point in history.

"That is why fighting France will link her nascent effort to that of the Soviet Union. It goes without saying that such co-operation will not in any way detract from the action she is taking in common with her other Allies. Quite the reverse. But in the decisive year now begun, fighting France will prove on the active and passive battlefields of this war that, in spite of her temporary misfortune, she is the appointed ally of the new Russia...

"Suffering France is with suffering Russia. Fighting France is with fighting Russia. France, in the pit of despair, is with the Russia which was able to climb from the darkness of the abyss into the sunlight of splendour."

One should, of course, take into account all the shadings of the historical background against which this speech to downtrodden Europe was made, a speech intended to inspire hope and arouse the fighting spirit. Laying great stress on the alliance with Russia, de Gaulle was mindful of his own interests, so that the glory of the Soviet victory also reflected on the Free French, as it were. His speech was obviously intended to produce an impression on the Western allies, who then openly slighted de Gaulle. In praising Russia, he was fighting a kind of psychological war against his Western partners.

The extremely emotional colouring of his speech did not

obscure his very realistic and clearcut social position, leaving his general political line in no doubt whatever. In his speech of January 20, 1942, he said that an alliance between the U.S.S.R. and France would excite nothing but "fury on the part of traitors and cowards who delivered her up to the enemy".

"Such men as these," de Gaulle said, "will not fail to protest that our victory at the side of Russia would mean social upheaval in France, which they fear above all. The French people scoff at this fresh insult. Frenchmen know themselves well enough to realise that the choice of their country's régime will always lie with them alone."

This statement is aimed in the first place against Vichy propaganda, which now called de Gaulle not only a "British agent" but also an "agent of Moscow". At the same time he offered the French bourgeoisie a guarantee, as it were, that an alliance with the U.S.S.R. in no way signified any changes in his basic political orientation. He also wanted to warn those in France who hoped for "social upheavals" that he would not allow anything of the sort. On January 29, 1942, in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador in London, he made a frank statement of his political plans for France's future. They were, in sum, plans for establishing strong executive power and a corporative parliament. In a report to Moscow, Ivan Maisky characterised de Gaulle's political tendencies as "modernised Bonapartism".

De Gaulle clearly realised, however, that all of his political ideals would remain in the realm of daydreaming unless Germany was defeated and France liberated, and that was impossible without the Soviet Union. Hence the need for an alliance with it, an alliance that was of special value for de Gaulle while he was ostracised in the West. Whereas the Soviet Union recognised the right of de Gaulle and his Committee to represent France, US State Secretary Cordell Hull spoke contemptuously of the "so-called Free French". The U.S.A. still had their ambassador to France under Pétain. In de Gaulle's view, "what the American policy-makers took for granted was the effacement of France". Besides, President Roosevelt had a personal dislike for de Gaulle, though he had not met him. The Americans' attitude to the Free French remained unchanged when the US entered into the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. That attitude became clear in connection with de Gaulle's attempt to establish his control over the French islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of Canada. On December 24, 1941, Free French ships commanded by Admiral Muselier approached the islands and established, with little difficulty and ready help from the population, the power of the Free French. That evoked a violent reaction in the U.S.A., which was on the point of sending there its warships to drive the

Gaullists out. But de Gaulle made it clear that the Americans would be met with fire. This acute conflict resulted in the State Department silently reconciling itself to the *fait accompli*, but now de Gaulle could expect nothing but further unpleasantness from Washington. This episode was soon followed by a new conflict over French possessions in the Pacific, where Americans did their best to encourage anti-Gaullist actions. Still, de Gaulle managed, by a terrific effort, to obtain US recognition of the authority of the Free French over territories liberated from Vichy. The U.S.A. did so because it needed to use them as its military bases. But Franco-American relations left much to be desired. No other government of the nations forming the anti-Hitlerite coalition was as badly treated by the White House as de Gaulle's. At the end of January 1942, de Gaulle said in a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador Bogomolov: "I want France to be liberated to renew the war with Germany, and they tell me to abandon French islands so that they might drop out of the war. The causes of this US policy lie in the secret deal between the U.S.A. and Pétain, according to which Pétain promises not to surrender the fleet and the bases in North Africa to the Germans, and the U.S.A. promises Pétain not to let de Gaulle into Africa... England, as we know, is under US influence. Both of these states want to maintain a strong Germany against the U.S.S.R. and France. I am sure that when the British approach Tunisia and I try to enter Tunisia with my French troops, I shall meet on the border a Bible-carrying American who will say that Tunisia is off bounds for de Gaulle... The French people are now little concerned with the British or Americans — they are looking at you, the Soviet Union."

There was nothing surprising about that, for the whole world was then looking at the Soviet Union. Different people with different feelings, ranging from delighted admiration to furious rage, realised that the destiny of world civilisation was being sealed on the battlefields of Russia. As a rule, those of the social background and conservative tendencies similar to de Gaulle's watched the Soviet Union with growing unease. There was widespread feeling that after June 22, 1941, the war had changed its character, it had become an entirely just, sacred war to save humanity, and moreover, it had objectively assumed an anti-bourgeois social colouring. But it was by no means all political leaders that drew the necessary conclusions from this fact. Moreover, many of these leaders of the Right-wing camp, like Churchill, while praising the "gallant Russian armies", did little to help the Soviet Union and its allies.

We must give General de Gaulle his due: curbing his very nature, views and feelings, the Connétable proved capable of

adapting his thinking to the changed character of the war. He realised that he might be left out of the mainstream of history if he behaved like the other political refugees in London, who persisted in their extreme anti-Communist positions, much like the sinking man who pushes aside the helping hand. He acceded to changes in the political colouring and social background of his movement. True, this manoeuvre did not come easily to him, and he performed it under pressure, temporarily and inconsistently. And he was a man who did not like to make concessions. How firm he was in standing on his independence when dealing with Churchill! By his innermost political nature de Gaulle was always inclined towards the Right. But now he preferred to seek support on the other flank, again displaying a remarkable sense of reality. This fact is of great significance in de Gaulle's biography, probably greater than the legendary appeal of June 18.

De Gaulle had not appealed to the French people, to the democratic masses. He was the first to use the word "the Resistance", but he visualised it as reviving the French regular army, which would fight on the side of the Allies. But the French people were not going to submit patiently to German occupation and the Vichy regime, passively awaiting the arrival of the Allied armies. Completely independently of de Gaulle, without even noticing his appeal, they began a hard and cruel fight against the invaders, starting the real Resistance in long-suffering France itself. Getting more and more information about that movement, de Gaulle came to realise that his London-based organisation might in the end become a handful of refugees without any links with the people, a handful that everyone would ignore at the hour of liberation.

De Gaulle also became conscious of the fact that in the absence of support from the true Resistance he could not hope to attain his prime goal — ensuring France's presence in the camp of the great victorious powers. The leaders of Great Britain and the U.S.A., intent on dividing between themselves the legacy of France, "the sick man of Europe", kept pointing out to de Gaulle the completely unrepresentative character of the Free French, unconnected with the real France and led by a rather obscure general.

Indeed, during the first year of the existence of the Free French movement, General de Gaulle had done almost nothing to establish links with the Resistance on the French soil, and had no idea how he could effect a merging of forces. In his *Memoirs* he confessed: "And yet, while consolidating our overseas base, it was of Metropolitan France that we were chiefly thinking. What to do there? How? With what? We had at our disposal no means of action in France and could not even see where to start on the

problem, but this did not prevent us from being obsessed by vast schemes, in the hope that the country would support them massively... But clandestine action was a field entirely new to us all. No preparations had ever been made in France with a view to the situation into which the country had been hurled...

"In short, there was nothing in Metropolitan France to which our action could attach itself."

However paradoxical that might seem, de Gaulle and his organisation, in operation for a year already, were in an even more complete vacuum in France than in London in June 1940. In England he had at least found official British support. But in France, which de Gaulle so eloquently represented on the international scene, there was no support for him at all. And that at a time when numerous Resistance groups had become active!

Attacks against the occupying force began during the very first days of the German invasion of France. The country was then divided into two zones: the northern zone, including Paris, which was occupied by the Germans, and the southern one, controlled by the Pétain regime (capital, Vichy). In the southern zone, where Lyons was the centre of the Resistance, groups of fighters emerged as early as the summer of 1940, later taking shape as *Combat*, *Libération*, *Franc-Tireur* and other organisations. The situation in the northern zone was much more difficult, for here one had to face the Gestapo. But the Resistance in this zone was especially tough from the very beginning. Here too, it centred round many organisations, such as *Front National*, *Defense de la France*, *Libération-Nord*, *Ce de la Résistance*, *OCM*, and others. Taken as a whole, the Resistance presented, particularly at the start, a very complex and variegated picture, with numerous groups appearing, disappearing, merging and splitting. There were many heroic units and groups which were destroyed leaving no trace of their activities. All of them operated underground and as often as not were unaware of each other's existence. Men of differing social backgrounds, political views, trades, professions and ages fought and died in these groups. Among them were workers and peasants, titled nobles and clergymen, professors and students, housewives and officers. Like a magic looking-glass, the Resistance reflected what was best, most courageous and noblest in the French nation. Love for their humiliated country and hatred for the invaders united the Resistance fighters. The bulk of them were workers. The well-known writer François Mauriac, the only member of the Academy among the Resistance fighters, later a great admirer of de Gaulle, wrote: "Only the working class as a whole remained faithful to France in her distress and humiliation."

Active participation of workers in the Resistance also deter-

mined the role of its political parties in this movement, above all the role of the Communist Party. At the time of the German invasion the Communist Party was hard pressed, having been banned in 1939: the Communists were persecuted, and many of them imprisoned. Nevertheless, it was the Communists who became the most active and militant part of the Resistance, its firm foundation, its heart and soul. Colonel Rémy, one of de Gaulle's closest assistants, in charge of establishing contacts between the Free French and the Resistance organisations, wrote after the war in his *The Book of Courage and of Fear* (*Le livre du courage et de la peur*): "For a long time during the enemy occupation, the French Communist Party represented the only coherent political organisation which possessed an excellent long-established apparatus, strict discipline among all its members and, above all, a profound faith. All these advantages permitted it to strike redoubtable blows at the invader. Directed by a Central Committee that was inaccessible to the uninitiated and always escaped the clutches of the enemy, the French Communist Party played a preponderant role in the organisation of francs-tireurs and partisans."

As for the other parties, a more or less active role was played by the Socialists, although many of them sided with Vichy, and some even became Pétain's ministers. Still, the Socialist Party figured prominently in the Resistance. Some Socialists had joined de Gaulle at an early stage, though they filled inconspicuous positions. The oldest party, the Radicals, who had identified themselves with the prewar Munich policy and later with Vichy, proved to be in its entirety outside the Resistance, with individual exceptions. The classic Right-wing parties were fully in support of Vichy, although at later stages a few of their members joined the Resistance. Various Left and Catholic groups took an active part in the movement. A great role was played by the trades unions. Taken as a whole, the Resistance was a very complex phenomenon riddled by numerous political, social, and tactical contradictions.

For this reason, when de Gaulle decided, in 1941, to establish direct contacts with the Resistance, he had to deal with a great number of organisations, for a unified command centre did not exist. Yet this circumstance, though causing difficulties of organisation, proved very advantageous for those who did their "Resistance" work in London. It permitted de Gaulle, who stood above the internal strife and contradictions in the Resistance, to claim the role of its leader. The rapprochement between the Free French and the Resistance was not easy. Complete unity was never attained. To the very end, they were separated by an abyss with very shaky bridges spanning it, which broke down immediately after the liberation. The causes for this lay in the profound social

and political differences between de Gaulle's movement and the Resistance in France.

Tactical problems were a source of serious argument. De Gaulle believed that the Resistance must become a network of secret units with their caches of weapons. They would only act on orders from the actual Supreme Commander of the Resistance — a role which the General, naturally, reserved for himself. At a time when masses of Resistance fighters were rearing to fight against the Germans, de Gaulle wanted them to wait for his orders, which would be issued only before the invasion of the Allied armies in France. For the time being the Resistance was supposed to be merely a factor in strengthening the prestige of the French National Committee headed by de Gaulle as France's only representative, and in the future, in helping him to establish his control over Metropolitan France. The Resistance forces, in de Gaulle's words, "would be powerfully effective, on condition that they formed a whole and were coordinated with the action of the armies of liberation..." But for the time being, they had to stay in reserve. De Gaulle insisted that "the moment had not come for starting open fighting at home".

But the Resistance organisations disregarded this tactical advice, which seemed strange and incomprehensible to them, and in the autumn of 1941 they began mass harassment of the invaders. On October 23, 1941 de Gaulle went on the air to make a speech that puzzled and astonished the Resistance fighters. "It is both right and natural," de Gaulle said, "that Germans should be killed by Frenchmen. If they did not wish to meet death at our hands, they had only to stay at home and not wage war on France... But there are tactics in war. The war of French people must be conducted by those entrusted with this task... My orders to those in occupied territory are, for a moment, not to kill Germans, for the good reason that it is too easy for the enemy to retaliate by murdering our combatant men and women, now temporarily disarmed. But as soon as we are in a position to launch a concerted attack from outside and inside France, you will be given the orders for which you are waiting."

This order of de Gaulle was not accepted by the fighters of the Resistance, who regarded it as amounting to cessation of the Resistance in general, rejection of its prime, decisive, and most active form. They were indignant about being ordered to do nothing but gather intelligence information under Colonel Passy or Jacques Soustelle (another trusted aide of de Gaulle, future leader of the fascist O.A.S. of the early 1960s). The combatant Resistance groups disobeyed de Gaulle's order, for they viewed it as capitulation; the order thus in no way increased de Gaulle's authority as the Resistance leader. At the same time it gave rise

to the tactics of *attentisme*, or "wait and see", which was a serious drag on the fight against fascism.

Still, de Gaulle succeeded in expanding his links with the Resistance. Despite their differences with de Gaulle, its leaders realised the need for setting up some command centre to direct the fighting. They badly needed weapons and money, and de Gaulle had it all. For this reason the contacts with London, despite extraordinary difficulties involved, grew steadily. A trip from France to London practically meant crossing the front line. Besides, de Gaulle's activities were continually cramped by the Intelligence Service, which created a network of its agents in France and directly competed with the Free French.

It was especially important for de Gaulle to win the support of some prominent leader of the Resistance. The fact was that the men that he sent over to France from London — all those former *cagouleurs* or members of the *Action française*, intelligence officers and professional spies — were thoroughly disliked by the Resistance combatants. A man was needed who would enjoy their respect and at the same time be inclined to support de Gaulle's line. Such a man was found, and he did the General an invaluable service in settling the problem of the internal Resistance.

That man was forty-year-old Jean Moulin, prefect of the Eure-et-Loir department, immediately arrested by the Germans on the capture of Chartres but soon released. Dismissed from his post as prefect by the Vichy government, he organised an underground Resistance group. Conscious of fragmentation in the movement, he felt the need for unity. He enlisted the support of some other Resistance leaders for achieving that task, such as Henri Frenay, leader of the *Combat*. Though comparatively young, Moulin had had quite a great deal of political experience. He had been head of the administrative department under Aviation Minister Pierre Cot in the Popular Front government, and he had links with Left circles close to the Communists. It was only natural that the *cagouleurs* of Passy regarded him with suspicion. As a former prefect, however, he was regarded as a highly suitable figure by de Gaulle, who valued the trusted functionaries of the state. In October 1941, Moulin reached Lisbon, and from there managed to get to London, with great difficulty. Throughout December 1941 he had long and frequent talks with de Gaulle, explaining to him what the Resistance actually was. For his part, de Gaulle endeavoured to get his support; the General could be charming, when he had to. In the event, they reached an understanding, and de Gaulle instructed Moulin "to realise in that zone the unity of action of all the elements that resist the enemy and his collaborators". In January 1942, Moulin returned to France by parachuting from a British plane. Moulin succeeded in drawing

together the three major organisations in the southern zone within the United Resistance Movement. He was recognised as de Gaulle's representative by the majority of the Resistance leaders and established de Gaulle's general delegation in France. Although it was presented in London as a supreme organ heading the entire Resistance, it was, in actual fact, merely a mediation bureau concerned with distribution of money, weapons, etc. Thus Moulin succeeded in obtaining mutual recognition of the Resistance and the Free French in London. That was a great achievement and a springboard for Moulin's further efforts to unite the Resistance.

Other representatives of the Resistance also came to London to see de Gaulle. In early 1942 de Gaulle was particularly interested in the Socialists. He wanted to reach an agreement with them before establishing links with the most influential force of the Resistance, the Communist Party. In March, Christian Pineau, the Socialist representing trade unions and *Libération-Nord*, arrived in London. In the course of long talks, Pineau and de Gaulle tried to find a common platform. But the General spoke mostly of the restoration of France's greatness, equally strongly condemning both Pétain and the Third Republic. That frightened the Socialists, as it meant that de Gaulle refused to fight for the restoration of parliamentary democracy after the war. At first, he would not hear of any projects of social reforms. So de Gaulle and Pineau could not reach an agreement, and on April 28, 1942, the Socialist leader was already heading for the plane when a motorcyclist handed him the text of de Gaulle's appeal to the Resistance in which the General did not put Vichy on the same level as the Third Republic, promising to restore democratic freedoms and implement social reforms.

André Philip was also among the Socialist Party members who came to London. He later recalled: "For three hours, de Gaulle gave me a most excellent inaugural lecture on the State and the Nation. When he fell silent, I said to him: 'My General, as soon as the war is won, I shall part from you. You fight to restore national greatness. I, to build a socialist and democratic Europe...'"

Those were the kind of speeches which de Gaulle heard, without much pleasure, from the Resistance representatives whom he met. In May 1942, d'Astier de la Vigerie, leader of the *Libération*, a major Resistance organisation, reached London aboard a submarine. D'Astier came from an aristocratic family that had produced several interior ministers under Napoleon and Louis-Philippe. He was a former naval officer, in short, a man of de Gaulle's own *milieu*. But d'Astier felt instinctively at that time that the Resistance was essentially a movement of the people, inseparable from the Left, democratic forces, from the Communist Party.

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He therefore also advocated social reforms and democratisation of France. He was now importunately interrogated for several hours first by British intelligence officers, then by the French. Finally, he was invited for a conversation with de Gaulle. "As with the others this morning," d'Astier recalled, "I had so great an impression of insurmountable incredulity — that incredulity in which I have been living in France for the last eighteen months as if in a cloud of cotton-wool — that I pleaded both his cause and our own. But why should he be incredulous? Suspicious, yes, because he despises men too much and too many things in the universe. Incredulous, no, because I am a French ant bringing him a fragment of straw, of material for his history..."

Indeed, no historical cause was possible without reliance on the broad masses, on the Resistance which embodied their hopes and aspirations. De Gaulle saw the need for shifting his political line; he gradually changed the nature of his speeches, which now included words rather unusual in his vocabulary. On April 1, 1942, he said: "...It is a revolution, the greatest in her history, that France, betrayed by her ruling and privileged classes, has begun to accomplish." On April 30, de Gaulle stated: "...It is the French workers ... who are setting an example of resistance in the midst of foes and traitors ... [who] uphold, in spite of everything, the honour, the glory, and the dignity of the French people."

On June 23, 1942, the underground newspapers of the Resistance published General de Gaulle's Manifesto intended to formulate the French people's aims in the war. It contained, in a most general form, the programme that was to unite de Gaulle and the Resistance. This document confirmed the tasks which he had put forward before — restoration of France's independence and territorial integrity, etc. Apart from that, however, the Manifesto covered important guarantees of France's internal social order after the victory. When Frenchmen "are freed from enemy oppression, all their internal liberties must be restored. Once the enemy is driven from our land, all French men and women will elect a National Assembly which, in the full exercise of its sovereignty, will determine the country's future". De Gaulle spoke of the need for overthrowing "the systematic coalition of private interests which, in France, has worked against the interests of the nation"; for attaining not only freedom but also social justice for everyone. "The French people," he said, "are massing for revolution."

Soon afterwards, on July 27, 1942, the Socialist André Philip was included in the French Committee of National Liberation in the capacity of Commissioner of the Interior. Henceforward, Passy and his Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action would only be concerned with the military problems of the Resistance,

while its political tasks were now within Philip's authority, subject, of course, to de Gaulle's overall direction. In this way Jean Moulin's efforts to unify the Resistance were complemented by changes at the top, at the General's headquarters, in his effective government.

But the strongest and most active Resistance organisation, *Front national*, in which Communists predominated, was still an outsider. The Communists formed the basis of one of the most militant and effective fighting forces of the Resistance. The embryo of a military organisation which the Communists began to build as early as 1940, had already become an underground army of *Francs-tireurs et Partisans Français* (F.T.P.F.).

In the name of liberation of France, the Communists demanded the unification of all the national forces. Moreover, for the sake of the country they were ready to take into account and accept de Gaulle's claims to leadership. In February 1942, their representatives met Colonel Rémy and, as de Gaulle writes in his memoirs, "charged him with telling me that they were ready to place themselves under my orders and to send a representative to London to hold himself at my disposal there..." Months passed, but this new appeal remained unanswered. De Gaulle could not overcome his fears that the Communists would "permeate the whole of the resistance in order to make of it, if possible, the instrument of their ambition..." He was decided "not to let them ever gain the upper hand, by-pass [him], or take the lead".

Thus, after two years of the existence of the Free French movement, only the first step had been made to unite the Resistance. De Gaulle cooperated only with the Socialists and did not accept the support of the Communist Party.

However, the internal Resistance was not de Gaulle's goal but merely an instrument for consolidating the Free French positions in the camp of the great powers. On this front, however, the situation was not too good, except for the immense asset which the establishment of an alliance with the Soviet Union proved to be. On returning to London in September 1941, after the extremely trying assertion of the Free French authority over Syria and Lebanon, de Gaulle had to contend with Churchill's icy attitude. The British Premier, who usually permitted his political differences to reflect on personal relationships, for a while even refused to meet de Gaulle.

In London, de Gaulle's life was not a bed of roses at all. One would have thought that a country which had offered him a roof over his head and the means for a great undertaking might make him feel nothing but gratitude. In reality, it was all quite the reverse. De Gaulle was quick to understand that London had become the cradle of the Free French through Churchill's cynical

calculations rather than goodwill. In praising the British political leader in his memoirs, de Gaulle repeatedly refers to his "ambiguous promises and calculated emotions". In general, the most colourful passages in these memoirs are acrimonious descriptions of the perfidy and devilish cunning of British diplomacy, not to mention the Intelligence Service, his pet aversion. One gets the impression that anything British became antipathetic to de Gaulle. "In the heart of concentrated and resolute England," he recalled, "an icy coldness enveloped us." However, de Gaulle's intention of moving his headquarters to Brazzaville or Beirut was not carried into effect, and upon his return from the Middle East he spent some ten solid months in London. His dependence on the British was too great. They were his source of money, information, means of communication, weapons, even freedom of personal mobility. Besides, from London it was easier to establish contacts with Metropolitan France, contacts that were particularly necessary now that he had to rely on the internal Resistance. He still lived in solitude at the Connaught Hotel, spending weekends with his family, which lived at first in Shropshire and later in Birkhamstead, a township some forty kilometres distant from London. Later the family moved to the Hampstead area in London. Actually, there were now three of them — the General, Madame de Gaulle, and their daughter Anne, for their son Philippe, after joining the nautical school, sailed and fought with the corvette *Roselys* and later with the torpedo boat 9B, as second-in-command. His daughter Elisabeth lived at the Catholic College of the Dames de Sion, preparing to enter Oxford University.

The Free French headquarters had long moved from the small premises of St. Stephen's House to the Carlton Gardens Hotel, where it at first occupied one floor and later the whole of the building, and even that later proved too confining, and many bureaux were dispersed throughout London. By the beginning of 1941, the civil staff of the Free French comprised 96 persons, and the military, 280 men and officers, apart from 70 civilians. De Gaulle was not too lavish with his subordinates' salaries; depending on their rank, they got between £15 and £30 a month. In the autumn of 1941, the activities of this relatively small staff began to resemble the work of a government. The National Committee chaired by de Gaulle sat regularly, not rarer than once a week, in the Clock Hall of the Carlton Gardens; its members performed the duties of ministers. But their function was largely advisory and executive. The General alone both reigned and ruled, and his decisions were above criticism. "In the last resort, indeed, after he had enlightened me, no national commissioner disputed my final word," writes de Gaulle. "In fact, while opinions might be divided, my responsibility, nonetheless, remained entire. In

the struggle for liberation the one who answered for everything was still, in the last resort, my poor self."

There was one rebellion, however, staged by Admiral Muselier, who believed that de Gaulle's policies threatened the friendship with the Allies. Returning to London after occupying the island of Saint-Pierre, he tendered his resignation as Naval and Merchant Navy Commissioner. But he wanted at the same time to remain commander of the Free French Navy. The British government lent Muselier official support, and that enraged de Gaulle still more. He sharply rejected this last bit of British interference, put an end to Muselier's attempts to stir up mutiny against himself among Navy officers, and that was the end of the Admiral's connection with the Free French.

In the meantime, painful friction between de Gaulle and the British government continued uninterrupted. In the spring of 1942, a conflict broke out again in Syria and Lebanon. The British persisted in thwarting de Gaulle's attempts to establish control over French Somaliland. And then an event occurred which brought de Gaulle's indignation to a boiling point. At three o'clock in the morning on May 5, 1942 he was informed that the British troops had landed on Madagascar. The British omitted to consult de Gaulle before the event, though he himself at that time advocated driving the Vichy governor off the island, whose territory was greater than that of France. When de Gaulle demanded an explanation, Eden could only promise him, in vague terms, to ensure the participation of the Free French in the administration of Madagascar. De Gaulle immediately sent his representative to the island, but the British impeded that mission and kept the Vichy governor of Madagascar in power. On the 6th of May, de Gaulle declared to the British government that he would cease all collaboration with Great Britain and the U.S.A. if they laid claims to any part of the French possessions.

The threat had its desired effect, and on May 10 Churchill invited de Gaulle to his office and talked to him for more than an hour. The British Premier spoke of his friendly feelings for France, of his desire to see her as a great power, and of the danger of Japanese invasion in Madagascar, which required prompt action. But his weightiest argument was the will of US government, which would hear nothing of de Gaulle's participation in the Madagascar operation. De Gaulle replied that he could make no concessions, for that which was being done to the French Empire would later be practised on France itself. He expressed his determination to make no concessions at all to the U.S.A. and Roosevelt. "Don't rush things," said Churchill. "Look at the way I yield and rise up again, turn and turn about." "You can," de Gaulle remarked, "because you are seated on a solid state, an assembled nation, a united

Empire, large armies. But I! Where are my resources? And yet I, as you know, am responsible for the interests and destiny of France. It is too heavy a burden, and I am too poor to be able to bow..." In conclusion, Churchill assured de Gaulle that he would not interfere with the establishment of the Free French control over Somaliland and Madagascar. "I shan't desert you. You can count on me," he said at parting.

In spring 1942, de Gaulle renamed his movement. It was henceforth to be called *la France combattante*, Fighting France. He did so in the conviction that 1942 would see decisive events that would turn the tide of the war. He was right there. But to what extent did his 70,000-strong armed forces justify the name "Fighting"? Their casualties in relation to strength indicate that the new name was quite apt. The losses of aircraft were twice as high as the entire effective personnel. 700 were lost of the 3,600 Navy servicemen. More than a quarter of the French merchant seamen were lost at sea. To these should be added the heavy losses incurred by the internal Resistance, although they did not become known until later.

Yet these losses were inconspicuous, for Frenchmen died in routine war operations like sailing in merchant convoys or air patrolling. De Gaulle wanted his soldiers to take part in major battles where they could win glory. That was why he insisted so strongly on two of his divisions taking part in the Libyan operations. When the British rejected his suggestion, he decided to send them to the eastern front, to Russia. But the British did not like the idea, so they agreed to let the French fight in Libya. The reason for the concession lay in the fact that German and Italian forces under Rommel were set for an offensive, and each soldier counted. As early as December 1941, Churchill informed de Gaulle that the British command was ready to comply with his request. The British Premier even suggested that de Gaulle should personally go to Libya: "Rommel is a panzer general, and you are a general of the armoured forces, too. Why don't you measure swords with him?" but de Gaulle had greater tasks to deal with, and Churchill's humour was lost on him.

Two French divisions with a total strength of 12,000, that is, one fifth of all the Allied forces there, held the positions around Bir Hakeim. On May 27 Rommel started his offensive, and that brought about an event of which de Gaulle had long dreamed: for the first time since 1940, the French and the Germans were fighting in a great battle. The French division of General Koenig found itself in a very difficult position. On June 7, Rommel's troops completely encircled it at Bir Hakeim. The French put up a very stiff fight. London newspapers ran accounts of this battle headlined "Heroic Defence by the French!" De Gaulle

watched the course of the battle with great concern. He knew that his divisions might be wiped out completely. But on June 11 they fought their way out of the encirclement. That was a great success, as admitted even by former Hitler's generals in their memoirs. De Gaulle was satisfied. "To the whole world," he wrote, "the guns of Bir Hakeim announced the beginning of the recovery of France."

The second anniversary of the June 18 appeal was celebrated with great ceremony. Ten thousand Frenchmen gathered in the immense Albert Hall ornamented with the Tricolour and the Cross of Lorraine. De Gaulle made a long and impassioned speech which began with Chamfort's words, "Men of reason have endured. Men of passion have lived." He drew a picture of the two years of the defeats and victories of the Free French, which served as a background, as it were, for his selfportrait. He naturally mentioned the recent feat of arms of the Fighting French: "When a ray of her reborn glory touched the bloodstained brows of her soldiers at Bir Hakeim, the world recognised France..."

It would indeed appear so, for the attitude of Great Britain and the U.S.A. to de Gaulle became unusually friendly in the early summer of 1942. On July 9, the US State Department sent de Gaulle a memorandum announcing the appointment of an American representative at the French National Committee and recognising de Gaulle's contribution to maintaining the spirit of the French tradition; it also promised military assistance to the French National Committee, "symbol of French resistance against the axis powers". Of course, this rather vague memorandum did not contain any clearcut formulas of recognition. Even British statements went further than that, not to mention the documents of the U.S.S.R. In view of the recent past, however, even that represented a serious advance. As for Great Britain, a declaration concerning the expansion of Franco-British cooperation was published four days later. On July 14, the French national day, General Eisenhower was present at a review of the French troops, while Anthony Eden declared on that day in a radio speech: "Thanks to General de Gaulle's decision, France has never been absent from the field of battle."

Americans and especially the British were unstinting in their praise, but they persisted in regarding de Gaulle as merely a "symbol" rather than a government or a basis for a government admitting of no alternatives. What Fighting French badly needed was recognition of their exclusive right to represent France. The Western Allies refused to do so, justifying de Gaulle's worst apprehensions. Only the Soviet Union extended then a friendly helping hand to the Free French. In the communiqué of September 28, 1942 the Soviet government recognised the French National

Committee as the only organ "having the power to organise the participation of French citizens and territories in the war and to represent the French interests before the Government of the U.S.S.R...."

In the meantime, American troops, aircraft, and naval forces were concentrating on the British Isles in the summer of 1942. De Gaulle was given no information about those military preparations. Whenever he introduced the theme of future military operations during his conferences with the official representatives of the U.S.A. and Britain, the latter immediately switched to other topics, while de Gaulle fell gloomily silent. Were they preparing to open the second front? If one were to believe the promises given the Soviet Union by the U.S.A. and England, that was precisely what was about to happen. As for de Gaulle, he was a most sincere advocate of opening the second front. In July 1942, he made representations to the Allied governments on that subject. De Gaulle believed the operation to be quite feasible, for Hitler's main forces were pinned down in Russia. For this reason, fifty divisions would suffice for a successful invasion of Europe, according to his calculations. De Gaulle submitted precise information concerning the force that the Fighting French could allot for the operation. In early July, he even issued the order to keep all the Free French forces ready for action — just in case.

But he was also aware of the existence of quite a different plan, according to which the invasion would be limited to North Africa. De Gaulle recalls: "Naturally I was in favour of a direct offensive in Europe, to be launched from England. No other operation would bring matters to a head. Moreover, the best solution for France was the one that would shorten the trials of the invasion and hasten national unification — that is, battle waged on the soil of Metropolitan France."

However, there were increasing signs that the U.S.A. and Great Britain, motivated by some secret objectives that had nothing to do with the goal of the speediest defeat of fascism, were preparing for a landing in North Africa. These plans were carefully kept secret from de Gaulle, more carefully than from Vichy. He was lost in the fog of conjectures, indignant at being left out of things when it was a question of landings on a French colony's territory. He also observed the suspicious manoeuvring of American diplomats. Robert Murphy, representing the U.S.A. in North Africa, played some complicated game from which de Gaulle was excluded. Everything went to confirm his suspicion that the U.S.A. was intent to tackle French problems without him, if not to eliminate him completely. The landing in North Africa meant that the liberation of France would be put off for a long time, and that de Gaulle would have no hand in it at all.

It would be hard to imagine anything more distasteful to de Gaulle, who hated to be led by the nose. He was even more acutely conscious of his humiliating position after the assumed goodwill which the British and Americans had displayed in July. It was a torment for de Gaulle to be in the very centre of preparations for great events directly affecting France, and yet to be completely debarred from these preparations. He therefore flew to the Middle East on August 5, and stayed there till the end of September, endeavouring to oppose the new British intrigues in the French colonies. But, however unbearable the situation in London might be, he had to return there and, in de Gaulle's words, "to bear our burden in the heart of a country that was friendly, of course, but alien, where everyone pursued a goal and spoke a language not our own, and where everything made me feel that our prize was out of all proportion to our poor means of achieving it."

On September 29, he had an argument, unprecedented in its vehemence, at 10 Downing Street. The British Premier spoke with great indignation of de Gaulle's independent stance, rejecting his claims on Syria, Lebanon, and Madagascar. As they exchanged broadsides, Churchill exclaimed furiously: "You claim to be France! You are not France! I do not recognise you as France!" He went on still more vehemently: "France! Where is France now? Of course I don't deny that General de Gaulle and his followers are an important and honourable part of the French people, but certainly another authority besides his could be found which would also have its value." De Gaulle interrupted him. "If, in your eyes, I am not the representative of France, why and with what right are you dealing with me concerning her world-wide interests?"

Churchill did not reply. That "Lieutenant of Roosevelt" would pursue his objectives along with the Americans, while de Gaulle was doomed to wait passively for the curtain to rise and for a new act of his drama to begin.

London, November 7, 1942... Bogomolov, the Soviet Ambassador attached to the governments in exile, held a reception on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the October 1917 revolution. René Plevin, a member of the French National Committee, who was among the guests, felt a touch on the elbow; an acquaintance of his, a Czechoslovak minister, whispered in his ear: "It is to be tonight..."

At that time, some 200 warships and 110 transports approached the shores of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco in the opening moves of operation Torch. 120,000 American and British soldiers began disembarking in the French colonies.

During the night, the British government informed Carlton Gardens of the landing; the call was taken by the officer on duty, Colonel Billotte. At six in the morning he came to de Gaulle. The General received him in his pyjamas and slippers. On hearing the news, he grew pale. "I hope that the men of Vichy will throw them into the sea!" exclaimed de Gaulle. "One does not enter France as a burglar!"

De Gaulle had known that the operation would take place. Yet he had hoped, to the last minute, that the Allies would give him some part in it or at least inform him of it. But he was ignored most humiliatingly. As he received in the morning Jacques Soustelle, one of his closest associates, he remarked despondently: "If there is large-scale fighting, only God knows the consequences that will follow for France. It is better not to get mixed up in it..."

That was one of the most difficult periods in de Gaulle's life. He felt the ground slipping from under his feet. It seemed that he was again in the same position as in June 1940, when he felt lonely and lost in the turbulent sea of events, and when his appeal of June 18 evoked, as he himself said, "irony, pity, or tears". At that time, however, de Gaulle had been inspired and warmed by hope. Indeed, he had achieved a great deal, despite everything. Now, everything had collapsed... But a man of exceptional strength and talent shows himself to advantage in situations of the greatest difficulty.

The bitter minutes of resentment at his destiny gave way to vigour and courage. He did not lose his head or start looking for an

easy opportunist way out. With terrific sang-froid and self-restraint, he began a most complicated political game against such experienced and strong opponents as Roosevelt and Churchill, to achieve a splendid victory after ten months of tense struggle. Unlike his self-complacent opposite numbers, he planned the game ten moves ahead, was extremely sensitive to the slightest changes in the political atmosphere, and so ultimately he won. It was the beginning of one of the most interesting stages in de Gaulle's career.

In the afternoon of November 8, de Gaulle was invited to 10 Downing Street. There was an outpouring of friendly feeling, expressions of sympathy, and apparent embarrassment on the part of Churchill and Eden. De Gaulle had in the meantime assumed his usual icy composure, demonstrating to these classical specimens of the British qualities a French exercise in the famous British imperturbability.

Churchill stated that the Americans had categorically insisted on pushing de Gaulle completely aside. "We have been obliged to go along with them in this," declared Churchill. "Rest assured, however, that we are not revoking any of our agreements with you... You have been with us during the war's worst moments. We shall not abandon you now that the horizon shows signs of brightening."

De Gaulle learned, not without satisfaction, that the Americans' secret flirtation with Vichy generals had not saved them from having to fight, and the fighting was rather heavy. Almost everywhere, the 200,000-strong French army was putting up stiff opposition. He also learned that the Americans had brought General Giraud, de Gaulle's old acquaintance and one-time superior, from France in a submarine. That hidebound general's only claim to fame had been his escape from German captivity. He was then held in readiness at General Eisenhower's headquarters in Gibraltar. But Admiral Darlan, one of the topmost men of the Vichy hierarchy, also happened to be in Algiers.

With complete composure, de Gaulle offered some military advice. He expressed astonishment that the Americans had not taken into account in their plans the essential prerequisite of capturing Bizerta, a stronghold in Tunisia. That was where the Germans might direct their reinforcements (a prediction that was fully borne out by the events). De Gaulle even used the opportunity to give the Britons a lesson in independent policy. "I cannot understand...", he said, "how you British could stand aside so completely in an operation that is of primary concern to Europe." "Whatever the case," he said in conclusion, "nothing matters more today than to reach a cease-fire. As for the rest, we shall see afterward."

At eight in the evening de Gaulle made an appeal over the radio to the Frenchmen in North Africa, to army officers and men, to the French population, which was in excess of six million here. There

was not a shade of hurt, arrogance or discontent at his being brushed aside in such cavalier fashion. He swept aside all personal feeling. He spoke as a political leader for whom the cause of defeating Hitler was paramount, as a patriot who could rise above personal ambition: "Rise up, help out allies, join them without reservations. Don't worry about names or formulas—rise up! Now is the great moment. Now is the hour of common sense and of courage. Frenchmen of North Africa, let us re-enter the lists from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, and the war will be won thanks to France."

And in the meantime the Yankees plunged into the affair with great gusto and a complete lack of political intuition, insensitive to its primary aspect—the antifascist character of the war. Things were done for immediate gain that left the impression of disregard for principles. It was exactly on November 8 that Roosevelt frankly expounded his policies in a conversation with André Philip, the member of the French National Committee who was sent to Washington to try to overcome the President's obstinate prejudice against de Gaulle. The emissary of Fighting France handed him the General's letter in which the latter described, with eloquent modesty, his irreproachable intentions, rejecting the suspicion of his dictatorial designs. "After the long and hard oppression of the invasion", he wrote, "who would have the stupidity to imagine that it would be possible to establish and maintain a personal power in France?" But would it really be such an absurd supposition? In any case, the letter would remain unanswered. André Philip was made to await the President's reception for a whole month, and he was invited to the Oval Room of the White House only on the day that followed the American disembarkation in North Africa.

The Socialist leader, a professor of jurisprudence, acted as de Gaulle's defending counsel; he went into a persuasive exposition of the political plans of Fighting France. But the President interrupted him brusquely: "For me, there is no France, politically speaking, until the moment when elections will give it its representatives..." "But in the period before the elections, and to organise them—?" "We engage, in fact, a body of political and military specialists that will ensure the administration of France while awaiting the re-establishment of democracy..." "Mister President, for the French people, a foreign invader is no more than an invader..." "I am not," said Roosevelt, "an idealist like Wilson, I am interested above all in the efficacy, I have problems to solve. Those who aid me in this, are welcome. Today, Darlan gives me Algiers, and I shout, 'Long live Darlan!' If Quisling gives me Oslo, I shall shout, 'Long live Quisling!' ...Let Laval give me Paris tomorrow, and I shall shout, 'Long live Laval!'"

In complete accordance with this policy, the American com-

mand concluded, on November 11, an agreement with Admiral Darlan, recognising him as High Commissioner for North Africa. Vichy governors of various parts of the French empire—Noguès, Chatel, Bergeret, Boisson—joined Darlan. These collaborationists and Vichy followers were willing to serve Americans, seeing the way the balance was going to tip. General Giraud, who demanded, in his naïveté, to be appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied forces, no less (that is, commander of the American force, too), was left in reserve. But he hastened to join Darlan and thus got command of the French army in Africa. On November 15, Darlan announced the establishment of the new regime—in the name of Pétain!

In the meantime, Hitler occupied the whole of France, including the southern zone. The enormous French Fleet was destroyed at Toulon: the French scuttled their ships, which could have served the cause of France's liberation. Pétain's regime thus became a mere dummy. And at that very time, the Allies handed the power in North Africa to Vichy men, right before the astonished eyes of the French who had awaited the Allies as liberators! Americans extended their patronage to representatives of a most disgusting and corrupt dictatorship, rejecting at the same time de Gaulle because of his "dictatorial inclinations". But de Gaulle had an impeccable reputation as a patriot, and his moral prestige among the French stood very high. Roosevelt won over the men of Vichy—and lost France! In those days, de Gaulle wrote to General Catroux about the events in North Africa: "It is all ugly. I think that soon it will all be thrown up, and we shall emerge as the only clean and effective organisation."

On November 16, a communiqué of the French National Committee was published, in which de Gaulle and his committee resolutely stated that they "took no share and assumed no responsibility in the negotiations in progress in Algiers", and that "if these negotiations were to lead to arrangements preserving the Vichy regime in North Africa, they would obviously be unacceptable to Fighting France". This brief communiqué was intended to show that de Gaulle acted only in accordance with the will and dignity of the French people. Understandably, it was favourably received by all the principled antifascists and patriots.

It now became increasingly clear what de Gaulle's tactical line would be under the new conditions, when the U.S.A. created an Americanised version of the Vichy regime in North Africa under the pretext of military expediency while continuing to reject de Gaulle's exceptional right to represent France. Churchill passively supported that policy, repeatedly confirming at the same time his obligations to Fighting France.

De Gaulle endeavoured to supplant the men of Vichy in North

Africa and to compel the U.S.A. to recognise the French National Committee as the sole representative of France. He tried to induce Churchill to intercede more vigorously for the rights of Fighting France before Washington. To achieve this, he used his two main trumps at the same time. First of all, he raised even higher the standard of the ideals for which the war was fought, in opposition to American primitive utilitarian policy. He relied on the people's hatred for fascism, which permitted no compromises with those associated with it, as were the men of Vichy. He greatly expanded his links with the internal Resistance, to be able to use his status of a nominal leader of that movement for consolidating his international positions.

On the other hand, he was quick to sense and make use of the mood of the bourgeoisie both in France and in the Anglo-Saxon countries. At the end of 1942, that mood was determined by world-historical events: the great Stalingrad battle raged then, and all North African affairs and the political squabbles connected with them looked downright petty. Stalingrad showed that the Soviet Union would emerge as the main winner in the war. That inevitably signified a growth in its authority and an increase in the influence of ideologically kindred forces, in the first place, of Communist parties. The bourgeoisie was increasingly worried about the danger of possible postwar social changes. De Gaulle insisted that only he and his embryonic government could save France from Communism, while the Vichy rulers of North Africa could only increase the influence of the Communist Party.

De Gaulle's tactics thus relied on the Resistance, the French people and its aspirations, while on the strategic plane he intended to use the positions gained in this way for averting the social consequences of the victory of the U.S.S.R. that would be dangerous for the bourgeoisie.

This soberly calculated course was subtly implemented during de Gaulle's conversation with Churchill on November 16, 1942. De Gaulle spoke of the short-sightedness and danger of using Vichy supporters in North Africa and of the possible catastrophic consequences of that policy, useful as it might be as a short-term measure. "We are no longer in the eighteenth century," he said, "when Frederick the Great paid the courtiers of Vienna in order to be able to take Silesia, nor in the Italian Renaissance when one hired the myrmidons of Milan or the mercenaries of Florence. At least, we do not put them at the head of a liberated people afterward. Today we make war with our own blood and souls and the suffering of nations." He then showed Churchill and Eden telegrams from France that revealed the stupefaction of public opinion. "Think," he told them, "of the consequences you risk incurring. If France one day discovers that because of the British

and the Americans her liberation consists of Darlan, you can perhaps win the war from a military point of view but you will lose it morally, and ultimately there will be only one victor: Stalin."

Churchill made no substantive objections, remarking merely that the events in question did not decide the future. But de Gaulle knew that fear of Communism was Churchill's most vulnerable spot, and that he would not sound a false note if he played on that string. De Gaulle went to implement his tactical plan with method, consistency, and redoubled energy.

It was necessary to preserve the unity of Fighting France at all cost and, moreover, to consolidate it and extend its influence with all possible means. True, de Gaulle's chances of achieving all this diminished. He could no longer use freely British radio, which was now controlled by Americans. Despite all this, Fighting France weathered the storm and even achieved some progress. Late in 1942, it established its authority over the islands of Madagascar and Réunion, and later Somaliland. The forces of Fighting France operated successfully in Libya: they took Fezzan, an important point ensuring the communications between Tunisia and Equatorial Africa.

De Gaulle watched the events in North Africa with special attention. He managed to send his mission there, but Darlan sent it back. That was all for the better, for nothing consolidated de Gaulle's authority so much as his disagreements with Darlan. That problem was soon resolved, however. On December 24, Fernand Bonnier de la Chapelle, aged 20, shot and killed the Admiral. This sudden assassination "seemed in accord with the harsh logic of events" to de Gaulle. The assassin was tried and condemned to death on the same day and executed the next morning. Why such great hurry? The condemned man kept saying to the last that some influential persons would intercede for him and prevent the execution, but no one did anything of the sort. It was a mysterious business which gave rise to a great many rumours. Some called de la Chapelle a royalist, others, a Gaullist.

Giraud was now invested with the rather astonishing title of "Civil and Military Commander-in-Chief". De Gaulle immediately telegraphed him, suggesting a meeting, but Giraud was evasive. However, correspondence between the two generals continued, although they obviously failed to understand each other. On January 17, there was yet another unexpected development. Churchill asked de Gaulle to come at once to Casablanca where he intended to organise a meeting between de Gaulle and Giraud. De Gaulle learnt that Roosevelt was also there. Wasn't it going to be a kind of contest between the candidates of the U.S.A. and Great Britain? De Gaulle decided that this comedy was not only undignified but also dangerous, and refused to come. Two days later

another telegram came with an official invitation from Roosevelt and Churchill requesting de Gaulle's presence at a meeting. The British Premier literally adjured de Gaulle to come, threatening to stop all support for Fighting France. De Gaulle went after some deliberate delays; he was not going to make any concessions. He was disgruntled at everything: at the absence of military honours, at being driven in a car with painted windows to conceal him from the local population, and at his residence in Anfa, a suburb of Casablanca, which was transformed into a military camp surrounded by barbed wire. All this seemed insulting to de Gaulle.

First, de Gaulle met Giraud. This General of the Army "repeated with insistence ... that he did not wish to concern himself with political questions" and "that he never read a newspaper or tuned on the radio". But he had nothing against Vichy, completely failed to understand the meaning of the Resistance and was ready to obey the Americans. De Gaulle then met Churchill and learnt from him the plan for "regulating" the French problem. A committee was planned with Giraud, de Gaulle and Georges as chairmen and Noguès, Bergeret and Peyrouton, the Vichy governors, as members. Peyrouton had just been appointed Governor General of Algeria. This appointment had raised a storm of indignation on all sides, for Peyrouton had been Pétain's Minister of the Interior, hated for his cruel reprisals against the patriots. The purpose of that committee would be the management of France's overseas possessions. De Gaulle immediately saw the objective of this move: Fighting France would be dissolved in a committee consisting of Vichy men, while he himself would automatically forfeit any right to represent France, put on a level with Peyrouton and the others; the Allies would somewhat improve the image of their Vichy puppets by including the patriot de Gaulle among them.

But all this was merely the façade of the American design aimed at remote but extremely tempting targets. De Gaulle rightly said that "the United States brings to great affairs elementary feelings and a complicated policy". On the surface, the elementary feelings were very much in evidence: order must be established in North Africa as soon as possible, to secure the rear for further large-scale military operations. It did not matter much who achieved it: it could as well be the Vichy regime. But there was a complicated policy behind that attitude. The Americans wanted to establish a temporary federal system of administering the French empire. The governors of the separate territories became independent as never before. The empire would be divided into bits and pieces, and there would be no one to defend its integrity. Using its economic might and political influence, the U.S.A. would then be able to control immense territories with their untapped, inexhaustible resources. All of this would naturally be done under the banner of advancing

the colonies' freedom and independence. What Churchill did directly and crudely in the Levant, the U.S.A. wanted to do more subtly throughout the French colonial empire. With his acute sense of the national, that is, in this case, the imperialist interests of France, de Gaulle immediately grasped the deep implications of the game the Americans played, camouflaged by the free and easy manners and studied simplicity of the carefree Yankees.

The General rejected the project disdainfully, pointing out that it "might appear adequate at the quite respectable level of an American sergeant" but could not be taken seriously. This was followed by a meeting between de Gaulle and Roosevelt, during which the President exercised all his charm while the General was gloomily haughty. De Gaulle wrote that "like any star performer he [Roosevelt] was touchy as to the roles that fell to other actors. In short, beneath his patrician mask of courtesy, Roosevelt regarded me without benevolence".

On the following day de Gaulle was visited by Giraud. This simple-minded martinet tried to persuade de Gaulle to accept the Anglo-American project, promising promotion to the rank of General of the Army, that they "might enjoy equal status". By way of reply, de Gaulle gave the French General of the Army a lecture on France and her national interest. Then came Robert Murphy, the behind-the-scenes author of the American policy in North Africa; he tried to induce de Gaulle to make concessions, insisting that "North Africa ... is not ten per cent Gaullist". The General would remember that statement. This talk was followed by another stormy session with Churchill and new meetings with Murphy and the British representative Harold Macmillan, who also tried to give de Gaulle a talking-to. Then the General was again invited to Roosevelt. The President asked de Gaulle to consent at least to pose before photographers along with Churchill, Giraud, and himself. That would be a sop for the press, which had fiercely attacked the president's North African policy for months. De Gaulle agreed to that. Delighted, the President cried: "Will you go so far as to shake General Giraud's hand before the camera?" De Gaulle's answer, in English, was, "I shall do that for you". Then the four actors appeared before a crowd of photographers, smiling pleasantly.

De Gaulle wanted to fly from Casablanca to Libya, to inspect the Fighting French troops. The British refused outright to give him transportation and suggested that he should return to London by a plane that happened to be flying there. In London, de Gaulle revealed the pro-Vichy implications of the American manoeuvres at a press conference. When de Gaulle still insisted on flying East, after the press conference, the British again refused to provide him with transportation. Moreover, a noisy campaign was started in British and American papers which sharply criticised his claims, plans, and

conduct. The papers told with great relish the anecdote about the Gaulle comparing himself with Clemenceau during his first meeting with Roosevelt and allegedly stating during the second meeting that his prototype was Joan of Arc rather than Clemenceau. The President was said to have told de Gaulle that he would have to make up his mind as to which of the two he really resembled, for he could not resemble both of them, of course. That was pure invention; in actual fact de Gaulle proposed to Giraud to set up a committee where de Gaulle would be chairman and Giraud, commander-in-chief of the army, where he (de Gaulle) was to be Clemenceau and Giraud, Foch. But many took this anecdote to be God's truth (there is a rumour that the story was made up by Roosevelt himself), for it was indeed reminiscent of the General's tone and manners. They say that there is some truth in every joke.

De Gaulle, however, did not regret his implacable attitude in Casablanca even for a minute. He now saw for himself just how weak the positions of Roosevelt and Churchill with their pro-Vichy committee were and how much they needed him. Indeed, the subject of "the bride", as the President and the Premier referred to de Gaulle, now continually cropped up in their secret correspondence. They could, of course, laugh at him, but they could no longer do without him. De Gaulle well remembered the idea Churchill expressed once during a slap-up lunch back in November: "For you, if the present is painful, the prospect is magnificent. At present Giraud is politically liquidated. In any event Darlan would be impossible... Don't confront the Americans head on. Be patient! They will come to you, for there is no other alternative." The events took precisely this course, and de Gaulle, rather than await developments with patience, skilfully forced them. Besides, he made certain concrete gains. Now, General Catroux would be his permanent representative in Algeria. The Gaullists who had been sent to prison after the unsuccessful coup of November 8, intended to put de Gaulle in power, were released. Headed by René Capitant, they went into vigorous action. The contest began between Gaullism and Giraudism or, to be more precise, the neo-Vichy regime. The most intelligent men in Giraud's environment, such as Jean Monnet, René Mayer, or Couve de Murville, directly representing big business, were more and more inclined to the idea of joining de Gaulle's camp. His fierce implacability in Anfa was part of a well-thought-out policy and of extensive feverish activity.

Since the Allied landings in North Africa, de Gaulle greatly extended his contacts with the internal Resistance; he now had more reason than ever to speak on behalf of France. The Manifesto on the goals of the Resistance, which de Gaulle had published in June, created a basis for a real rapprochement with the Resistance with its republican, democratic, and even revolutionary spirit. De

Gaulle's statements made the Resistance organisations easier in mind concerning his political objectives. Earlier, he had been worried about the too rapid growth of fighting in Metropolitan France, but now he began to encourage the fighting—under his control, of course. His representatives set up the Organisation of the Resistance of the Army (*l'Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée*) in the south of France, consisting of officers of the Vichy army. He appointed General Delestraint Commander-in-Chief of the "secret Army". The General, a true patriot, endeavoured to combine his forces with those of the *Francs-tireurs et Partisans* led by the Communists. At the end of 1942, de Gaulle entrusted Jean Moulin with the task of establishing the National Council of the Resistance (*Conseil National de la Résistance*). It was decided to include in it representatives of all the parties, even those Right-wing prewar parties which fully supported Vichy—the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation. This was done to weaken the role of the Communist Party in the National Council of the Resistance, which would inevitably become decisive in view of the Communists' actual share in the antifascist struggle. De Gaulle's most significant step after the Allied landings in North Africa was his decision to establish, at last, direct links with the Communist Party, which he had persistently avoided. On November 25, 1942, Colonel Rémy met a representative of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party. On de Gaulle's instructions, Rémy suggested that the Communist Party should send its representative to London. On January 8, 1943, Fernand Grenier, member of the Central Committee of the F.C.P., met Colonel Rémy at the Montparnasse Railway Station in Paris. They travelled to the coast town of Quimper, where they went to sea aboard a merchantman and then switched to a British trawler and thus arrived in London. On the next day Fernand Grenier came to Carlton Gardens, where he was received by General de Gaulle. Grenier made a detailed report to the General on the situation in France, telling him how badly the Resistance fighters needed arms and money. De Gaulle interrupted him: "You will discuss this with Passy," and then asked him two questions: "And Giraud, what do you think of him? What will happen after the liberation?" Grenier replied that, in the opinion of the Communists, it was necessary to put an end to the duality of power which existed between Algiers and London and to set up in Algiers a provisional government under de Gaulle and Giraud. As for the future, the French people would itself choose worthy men and put them in power.

"So you think," said de Gaulle, "that France will go Communist?" "One thing is clear, my General," replied Grenier, "in the lists of the executed ... one often sees names followed by the note, 'Communist'. These are all names of metallurgists, railwaymen, teachers, never those of industrialists or bankers. This decisive role

of the working class will have repercussions in the future. In our view, the republic of the future will have to implement profound political and social reforms, but our opinion is that the patriots that will unite themselves for liberating our country, will have to remain united in reconstructing it on a new basis. However, to tell the truth, we think at this moment about the present struggle rather than about the problems of the future."

But de Gaulle thought mainly of the future, particularly when he established cooperation with the Communists. Using the thesis about Communist danger to exert pressure on his Anglo-Saxon partners, he did not simply act in the spirit of Machiavellism—as usual; he also believed that this danger was real. As the end of the war came near, the element of anti-Communism in his actions continually increased. An ineradicable class instinct compelled him to use all possible means to check the growth of the influence of the Communist Party. This also affected his attitude towards the Soviet Union, whose successes increased the attraction of the Communist ideals. In January 1942, he paid due tribute to the Soviet victory in the battle of Moscow. A year later, he said not a word about the even more magnificent victory in the battle of Stalingrad.

While the battle of Stalingrad was decisive for the very existence of France, de Gaulle's political destiny depended early in 1943 on the successes of the Resistance movement on the French soil. It was at that time that the militant character of the Resistance became more apparent than ever—to de Gaulle's great advantage. The Vichy regime fully revealed its traitorous essence. Laval had unlimited powers, and the Vichy police now vied with Gestapo in atrocious reprisals against the patriots. Forced deportment of manpower to Germany, introduced in mid-January, increased the flow of volunteers to the detachments of *Franco-tireurs et Partisans, maquis*, the "secret army". General de Gaulle no longer tried to restrain the fervour of the Resistance fighters—on the contrary, he inspired them to new feats in his appeals of early 1943: "We must win... To win, we must fight! ... Workers, join our detachments, you will get bread and arms in our ranks. ... Ambush the *boches* and the requisition agents! Peasants, stock up supplies for our detachments! Form partisan units! "

What de Gaulle especially needed now were concrete demands for investing him with power in North Africa, and the number of such demands kept growing. Late in November 1942, the united organisations of the Resistance in the south appealed to the governments of the U.S.A. and Great Britain: "We urgently request that the destiny of liberated French North Africa be put into General de Gaulle's hands as soon as possible."

De Gaulle was especially eager for expressions of confidence in

him as head of the future provisional government on the part of prominent political leaders. Such declarations were made by Léon Blum, Georges Mandel, Paul-Boncourt, and about a dozen of prominent parliamentary figures. In April 1943, Edouard Herriot, president of the Chamber of Deputies, who was in detention at a Vichy Prison, wrote that he regarded de Gaulle "as the only person capable of realising a union of the immense majority of the French for restoring France. In my view, General Giraud has no political authority and is only a military leader".

On May 15, Jean Moulin sent a message to General de Gaulle on behalf of the National Council of the Resistance, confirming that all the Resistance organisations of France demanded the setting up of a provisional government in Algeria under de Gaulle's chairmanship. On May 27, the Council confirmed this demand at its first sitting which took place in the centre of Paris, in Rue du Four. The setting up of the National Council of the Resistance greatly consolidated de Gaulle's positions in the political duel with American-supported General Giraud. It was not accidental that the publication of Jean Moulin's message was delayed by the British at the insistence of the Americans. At such a moment, when the balance of forces shifted radically in de Gaulle's favour, one had to be prepared for the worst. For several days, de Gaulle thought it best not to appear at the Carlton Gardens at all—just in case. He knew only too well that even the most respectable of governments could ruthlessly put opponents out of the way...

At the same time, a complicated political game was played in North Africa itself. It was increasingly difficult to keep the men of Vichy in power. In early March, Giraud decided on a complete break with Pétain's government and declared all of its legislation invalid. Giraud even made some speeches of a "democratic" nature. But that did not save the situation, which became more and more scandalous. Now everybody, even the Americans, saw the only way out in including de Gaulle in the governing organs of North Africa, but they still wanted to leave supreme power in Giraud's hands. On February 26, de Gaulle made known the conditions of his participation in the formation of provisional central power organs, the most important one being the handing over of real power to himself. But Giraud, while accepting the political terms, refused to concede his priority. On the other side, the Americans, supported by the British, used every means to pressure de Gaulle into consenting to a secondary role. But the American diplomats and politicians, like Robert Murphy, did not know their general yet; he was adamant. In the meantime, support for him grew within the Resistance and in North Africa. Washington still tried to ignore him. On May 8, 1943, Roosevelt wrote to Churchill: "...It seems to me the conduct of the Bride continues to be more and more aggravated. His course and

attitude is well nigh intolerable... De Gaulle is without question taking his vicious propaganda staff down to Algiers to stir up strife between the various elements... De Gaulle may be an honest fellow but he has the Messianic complex... I do not know what to do with de Gaulle. Possibly you would like to make him Governor of Madagascar! "

The American Supreme Command prevented de Gaulle from taking power in his hands in North Africa, referring to the inadmissibility of political changes while military operations continued. But on May 11, the German and Italian armies capitulated, and this argument was no longer valid. General Giraud gave up his priority and on May 17 requested de Gaulle to form the French central organs of power.

Thus the way to Algeria was open. But couldn't it be a trap? What awaited de Gaulle in North Africa?

General Giraud, enjoying the support of all-powerful Americans, had absolute power there. He had the army, the police, the administration, the press, the radio. The whole of the administrative personnel consisted of Vichy supporters who had no sympathy at all for de Gaulle.

As for de Gaulle, he would have no more than a dozen subordinates and no power, no chance to publish in the newspapers or broadcast on the radio one single word without the American authorities' permission. It was true that loyal Gaullists were active in Algeria, and that de Gaulle had the support of the internal Resistance. But his active supporters were not very numerous, and the Resistance was far away, across the Mediterranean. Of course, he had moral superiority and the immutable faith in himself and his mission. If only he had a few divisions to back them! Alas, he had none. The future was nebulous and unknowable. Besides, going to Algeria meant burning his bridges. He could not return to London. The Allies' patience had its limits, and they gave him to understand that the limit had been reached. Recently, Fighting France had been much too closely watched by the Intelligence Service. If he failed, escape to Brazzaville would be the only way out, and that would mean the failure of the whole undertaking started on June 18, 1940. He could, of course, settle for a compromise, a bargain, he could make concessions and be satisfied with what little he could get. But this possibility did not even enter de Gaulle's head.

He took the decision to fly to Algeria, and on May 30 his plane crossed his own particular Rubicon—the waters of the Channel, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean. At noon, his plane flew over the city of Algiers, a vast crowd of white houses lying under the dazzling sun on the shore of a bright blue sea.

On the next day, a conference began at the *lycée* Fromentin

intended to achieve a merging of de Gaulle's French National Committee and Giraud's "civil and military command". The membership of this assembly proved to be very advantageous for de Gaulle. He was accompanied there by two members of his Committee, André Philip and René Massigli, and Giraud, by General Georges and Jean Monnet mentioned above. Since General Catroux also took part in the sessions, de Gaulle had four votes to Giraud's three. De Gaulle demanded at once that the army command should be subordinated to civil authority. He wanted to curb Giraud's power from the start. Giraud protested, however, and was supported by Georges, while Monnet was inclined towards a compromise. De Gaulle also demanded the resignations of the governors of Morocco, West Africa and Algeria connected with Vichy—Noguès, Boisson and Peyrouton. No decisions were taken.

On the next day an unexpected event changed the situation in favour of de Gaulle. The governor of Algeria Peyrouton tendered his resignation, sending his tender to de Gaulle, although the latter had no official authority as yet. De Gaulle accepted the resignation, but Giraud, enraged, appointed Admiral Muselier prefect of police, that very Muselier who had some old scores to settle with de Gaulle. Troops were called in, and all the vital points in the city were occupied by gendarmes. All this built up an atmosphere of a military coup, intended to shake de Gaulle. But he was calmly awaiting the new conference of the Seven on June 3. The decision was taken to set up the French Committee of National Liberation, headed by de Gaulle and Giraud. Catroux, Philip, Massigli, Georges and Monnet became its members. The Committee was invested with the functions of a provisional government, as de Gaulle had demanded. Its goal was restoring the Republic and destroying the Pétain regime. The Vichy governors had to resign.

Thus de Gaulle imposed on the Committee his most important demands, although Giraud held the same post of chairman as de Gaulle. But Giraud's positions were fatally undermined. Jean Monnet supported de Gaulle and his three followers, while Giraud had only General Georges on his side. The balance of power in the Committee was now five votes to two in de Gaulle's favour. Now, what had happened? Why had Giraud lost his most important positions? Why did Jean Monnet virtually join de Gaulle?

The point is that all these events were by no means isolated from the general political situation in North Africa. Apart from the Arab population, which had no rights at all and was not consulted on any of these issues, there were many French settlers here, especially in Algeria. In all, there were about 1.5 million in the whole of North Africa. But the real power was in the hands of the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie—the rich landowners, owners of industrial, commercial, and financial firms, and top officials of the

colonial administration. Closely linked with the bourgeoisie of France proper, this politically active and influential élite followed different political trends, but they had a common feature—the desire to retain their colonial privileges and the links with France which protected them; and, of course, they all wanted to avert any serious social changes. Would General Giraud cope with this task? That was the question which worried the North African bourgeoisie early in 1943. The experiences of the administrative activities of Giraud with his primitive conservatism, neglect for “politics” and blind servility towards the U.S.A., proved deplorable in the extreme. An inexperienced administrator, he made a hopeless mess of the affairs, showing a complete ineptitude for effectively protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie. For instance, he proposed to mobilise 300,000, in order to have a large army. Not to mention the fact that there was no equipment for such a mass of men, the mobilisation disorganised the economic life of the country that was a shambles even before. Besides, General Giraud was indelibly stamped as a Vichy man and thus would have no solid political status in a situation where the breakdown of the Vichy regime was inevitable. His compliant attitude towards the U.S.A. did not augur well for the French bourgeoisie, for he apparently did not intend to protect North Africa against American economic infiltration. As opposed to Giraud, de Gaulle showed himself to be a vigorous defender of French colonialism. His social background and conservative political views were well known, while his links with the internal Resistance could only be instrumental in opposing the fervent revolutionary hopes of the rank-and-file antifascist fighters. The situation was thus favourable for de Gaulle, while his opponent was losing political weight. That was the reason for Jean Monnet, that prominent representative of big business, coming over to de Gaulle’s side. It was only because of the Allies, the U.S.A. and Great Britain, that de Gaulle could not get rid of Giraud at once. That was the main obstacle that he had to overcome. Everything depended here on his political skill, on those methods which he had worked out a long time ago in his book *The Edge of the Sword*. The hour had come when he would need cunning, secrecy, and ability to acquire prestige and retain power, without which, as de Gaulle once wrote, the very existence of a man of action was impossible.

Thus on June 3, the “two-headed” French Committee of National Liberation was constituted, in which de Gaulle formally occupied the same post as Giraud but had, in fact, great advantage. At the conclusion of the session de Gaulle was overcome with a feeling of sympathy towards his rival and, as he recalls in his *Memoirs*, “embraced General Giraud with all [his] heart”. The “friendship” between the two generals worried the Allies so much

that they decided to interfere. Churchill and Eden had secretly come to Algiers and lived there “in the underground”. The British Premier invited de Gaulle to his place and stated plainly that he had come to take certain steps “if too brutal a shock had occurred—if, for example, you had devoured Giraud in one mouthful”. After that meeting General de Gaulle decided to expedite the operation of eliminating Giraud, giving no chance for the Allies to interfere.

On June 5, the Committee of Seven met to coopt the rest of the members and distribute the functions between them. Each of the two chairmen suggested his candidates. De Gaulle naturally filled the Committee with loyal Gaullists, while Giraud, relying on the advice of Jean Monnet, proposed candidates whom he did not know from Adam. As a result, two of them, Couve de Murville and René Mayer, proved to be de Gaulle’s supporters. De Gaulle thus summed up the results of the conference: “Certain that this group was prepared to support me, I began the next play. But before throwing the dice I shook them hard.”

On June 8, the Committee sat again, and de Gaulle demanded that Giraud should have merely the function of inspecting the troops under the Committee’s control, which meant that he would either have to obey or resign. But the rest of the committee were not yet ready to dispense with the “Commander-in-Chief”. De Gaulle then stated that he could no longer take part in the work of the Committee that could decide nothing. He retired to his villa Les Glycines and spent six days there. But these six days were by no means wasted. First, during that time the new members of the Committee had to come over from London, whose presence would ensure de Gaulle’s majority. Besides, General Giraud was thoroughly worked over by the representatives of the French military command, influential figures from the local bourgeois circles, and their obedient media. General Giraud could no longer make head or tail of any of this, he did not know whom he must listen to. The thing was that the Americans insisted that he should not give up, under any circumstances, the post of one of the chairmen of the Committee, and that his departure would threaten the carrying out of major Allied operations. State Secretary Cordell Hull stated exactly at that time that Americans and the British did not trust de Gaulle. From the military standpoint, he said, de Gaulle’s accession to power would mean a great threat to the communications lines in North Africa, stretched across 1,400 miles. The Americans did not want to have unfriendly generals in their rear. In June, President Roosevelt wrote to Churchill about de Gaulle that the moment had come to sever relations with “that person” who merely impeded the Allies’ military effort.

In view of all this, when de Gaulle interrupted his boycott on the arrival of the new members of the Committee and held a new

meeting, now with 14 members present, Giraud again vigorously protested against his removal from the post of Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of the French Army. On June 19, General Eisenhower invited de Gaulle and insisted that Giraud should keep his post; otherwise the U.S.A. would stop deliveries of arms to the French.

De Gaulle made the concession, for the time being, and Giraud now commanded the French troops in North Africa, while de Gaulle, the rest of the French army. But all basic matters were now in the competence of the Committee of National Liberation, where de Gaulle had a reliable majority. On July 2, Giraud left for the United States to conduct negotiations about American arms deliveries. The 23 days during which he was absent were used by de Gaulle for consolidating his position. He built an efficient administrative machine, entirely staffed by Gaullists, of course. The National Committee functioned without a hitch, unreservedly obeying de Gaulle. Later de Gaulle recalled: "...If opinions differed my arbitration was delivered without difficulties."

All this time, the manoeuvring aimed at eliminating Giraud did not cease for a moment. To refute the charge of dictatorial designs, de Gaulle stated solemnly that he would only represent France until "victory and liberation", whereupon he would relinquish his claims to power and "would not be a candidate for any office". On July 14, an immense demonstration was organised in Algiers on the occasion of the national day. The crowd enthusiastically cheered de Gaulle. "The flood of emotion," he writes, "with which the crowd replied to these words revealed on the spot the definitive failure of the intrigues which certain individuals had long opposed to me..." The man who had inspired these intrigues, Robert Murphy, stood next to de Gaulle on the platform; recalling Murphy's statement during their talks in Anfa in January, the General told the American diplomat: "Those are the ten per cent Gaullists that you reckoned on in Algiers."

On July 31, the chairmanship of the Committee of National Liberation devolved on de Gaulle alone. For a while Giraud continued to sign the ordinances together with de Gaulle, but it became a mere formality, and in November Giraud was finally dropped from the Committee. It took de Gaulle exactly two months to overcome the opposition of the U.S.A. and get rid of Giraud, taking all power in his hands. As de Gaulle pointed out in this connection, "The common effort was to gain much thereby".

On August 26, the governments of the great powers officially recognised the French Committee of National Liberation, of which de Gaulle was now complete master. True, the formulas of recognition differed sharply. The U.S.A. recognised the Committee merely as an organ "administering those French overseas territories which

acknowledge its authority". Great Britain went a bit further, calling the Committee "the body qualified to ensure the conduct of the French effort in the war..." As for the Soviet Union, "Moscow revealed itself as the most generous", in de Gaulle's words. The U.S.S.R. recognised the Committee as representing "the interests of State of the French Republic" and "the only qualified representative of all French patriots struggling against Hitlerism". In all, 26 states recognised the Committee then.

Yet, as the formulas of recognition of the French Committee of National Liberation by the United States and Great Britain were very vague, de Gaulle continued the fight to improve France's position. He insisted on sending a French expeditionary force to Italy and on participation in the peace settlement. On the Soviet Union's insistence, a French representative became a member of the Allied Advisory Commission for Italian Affairs, which began to function in December. Fighting France thus was for the first time represented on the international scene. Still, de Gaulle realised that it was a far cry from recognition of France as a great power. France was not invited to the "Big Three" conference in Tehran. How was he to attain that goal? Who could he rely on? The U.S.A. openly opposed him. He could only rely on the U.S.S.R. In the autumn of 1943, in a conversation with the American State Secretary Hull, who travelled to Moscow via Algiers, de Gaulle said: "We are delighted to see you making direct contact, in America's behalf, with Soviet Russia; I intend to go to Moscow myself one of these days in behalf of France."

The struggle for international prestige was impossible without internal support. After Giraud was ousted out, it was necessary to make the French Committee of National Liberation as broadly representative as possible. In early November, de Gaulle changed its composition. It now consisted of 16 members, several of whom represented various Resistance organisations; they had come from enemy-occupied France. Among the commissioners, there were several members of parliament who had not voted for handing power over to Pétain. The parties of the Radicals, the Socialists, the Christian Democrats and those of the Right wing ("the moderates") were represented. Several members of the Committee were linked with the business circles, with banks and industrial firms. There were men of substantial property among them, such as Jean Monnet and René Mayer. All of them were only responsible to General de Gaulle. He himself was not answerable to anyone and had dictatorial powers, as he later admitted.

The French Communist Party, the only party that was not stained with collaboration with the enemy, the party that carried on an unparalleled heroic fight as part of the Resistance, was not represented on the Committee. At the end of August, General de

Gaulle spoke of his desire to include Communists in the Committee, but he wanted to choose the suitable candidates himself. This was in contradiction to the principles of the Communist Party, whose members could only join the government by decision of the Central Committee. Negotiations began on this question but were later broken off by de Gaulle who said that he was "antagonised by this prolonged haggling". He also hesitated over the branches of governmental activities that could be entrusted to Communists, intending to put them in the least important and purely technical posts.

In the long run, however, de Gaulle did reorganise the Committee, including Communists in it. He had to demonstrate before the landings in France that all the anti-German groupings and parties supported his government; in any case, he had to create the appearance of such support.

On April 4, 1944, two Communists became members of the Committee—François Billoux as Commissioner of State and Fernand Grenier as Commissioner for Aviation. For the first time since its foundation in 1920, the Communist Party participated in the government. This act was welcomed by the masses of the Resistance fighters, increasing their trust in General de Gaulle.

On November 3, 1943, de Gaulle convened in Algiers the Provisional Consultative Assembly, a semblance of parliament. With his old repugnance for parliamentary democracy, he did everything to restrict its rights. He could not simply neglect to convene the Assembly, as he needed badly to make his administration representative of broader sections of the population: The Assembly would have to work out the recommendations to the Committee of National Liberation on the elimination of the Vichy regime and its replacement by a new state structure, to put forth projects for political and social reforms, and to express its opinion on the forms of assistance to the Resistance, on foreign affairs, etc. These tasks were formulated in de Gaulle's opening speech on the day when the Assembly was ceremoniously inaugurated. He also outlined his political plans, if only in very general form. He said that the opening of the Assembly "was, in effect, neither more nor less than the beginning of the restoration of French representative institutions". De Gaulle solemnly recognised the great role of the internal Resistance, pointing out that it became "the main form of action for the mass of the French".

De Gaulle was present at some 20 of the 50 sessions of the Assembly in Algiers; he made comprehensive reports or spoke in the debate. At all times he tried to avoid burning issues or conflicts, emphasising in every way his solidarity with the Resistance and the spirit of national unity. This tone was natural in view of his desire to get the support of the Assembly. He needed new proofs that France followed him. And he got that support. The Assembly

approved his position with regard to the Allies. It recognised the Committee of National Liberation as the government of France.

There was a general desire for unity in those times, and that attenuated contradictions and damped differences of opinion. But there were plenty of these cropping up in the most important questions. What would become of France after the liberation? This was an issue much debated in the Algiers Assembly. Everybody agreed that the Vichy regime must be destroyed. But what should replace it? At this point opinions became divided. The men of the traditional bourgeois political mould believed that one should simply restore the system of the Third Republic. There were even suggestions to convoke the same Chamber of Deputies that had voted in favour of Pétain. It would simply abrogate its decision, and that would be the end of it. But the men representing the masses of the Resistance fighters had other plans. Their dream was radical democratisation of the Republican system and establishment of the power of the people. A sovereign one-chamber National Assembly must decide the destiny of France.

"I did not share this inclination," de Gaulle recalls. "On the contrary, what seemed to me essential for the nation's future recovery was a regime of action and responsibility... It was essential that the Chief of State, by the method of his election, by his rank, his powers, be in a position to fulfil the function of national arbiter... But this was not the moment to organise a public discussion of this subject. Letting the flood of theories sweep past ... I led the Assembly to a cautious conclusion."

It was in Algiers already that the difference of opinion between de Gaulle and the Resistance on the power structure in postwar France became apparent, which in Paris would soon become a yawning abyss. Ingrained individualism and aristocratic attitudes were expressed in his disdain for the power of the plebeians. "Deliberation is the work of many men. Action, of one alone." That was the concentrated expression of de Gaulle's political philosophy; its antidemocratic spirit ran counter to the very essence of the Resistance. In the situation that then existed, "action of one alone" was made possible by the actions of many selfless, heroic and disinterested Resistance fighters. The representatives of the Resistance in the Consultative Assembly obviously had no desire to continue this situation after the liberation. De Gaulle fully realised what that rather reserved attitude meant. He wrote: "...There was not one among them who did not strive to replace [the Vichy] regime without an accompanying de Gaulle triumph."

There were also great differences between the majority of the Assembly's delegates and de Gaulle on the issue of responsibility of the enemy's collaborators, of just retribution for the traitors. The men of the Resistance, who had seen the crimes of the Vichy

regime with their own eyes, clamoured for just punishment. De Gaulle did not share this attitude, believing that only a small group of the highest officials of the Vichy regime should be punished; he endeavoured to curb the desire for retribution. The explanation lay not only in the community of social background of de Gaulle and Pétain and coincidence of many of de Gaulle's views with the theories of Charles Maurras, the Vichy ideologue. Lenience towards Vichy crimes was also prompted by the concrete political necessities. In the summer of 1943, Vichy supporters began to change sides en masse, joining de Gaulle, for he now embodied the conservative social tendency that had given rise to Vichy. Besides, this gang of extremely practical collaborationists wanted to be with the winning side. De Gaulle did not interfere with this "conversion" of many Vichy supporters to the true faith, otherwise he would have had to renovate the entire military, administrative and judicial machine. For instance, nearly the whole of the officer corps of the French Army and in particular the Navy was essentially pro-Vichy. De Gaulle wanted to establish order in France, and all the "forces of order" served Vichy. The influx of a great many men who had accepted capitulation and Pétain's "national revolution" entailed changes in the character of the Gaullist movement. "Rebellious" at its inception, it became conservative as it neared its triumph. It is not surprising that the view became current among the bourgeoisie that de Gaulle and Pétain took different paths towards a single goal, and that each of them defended France in his own way.

Most recommendations of the Consultative Assembly were of a rather general character, for they would mostly be carried out after the liberation of France. But the demands of the Assembly became categorical and insistent when the question arose of rendering immediate assistance to the Resistance, which badly needed weapons. Before 1943, it was mostly the Communist-led organisation of *Franco-tireurs et Partisans Français* (F.T.P.F.) that was engaged in an armed struggle with the invaders. In 1943, however, other Resistance groups also began military operations. Increased activity of the internal Resistance and the setting up of its National Council were an important foundation of General de Gaulle's political activity.

However, towards the autumn of 1943, the affairs of the Resistance became a source of great worry to him. In June, the Germans arrested General Delestraint, commander of the "secret army". Soon after, Jean Moulin, Chairman of the National Council of the Resistance, was caught and died under torture, betraying nothing. These men united the Resistance, and at the same time they implemented de Gaulle's line. After their death, he sent several other representatives to France, but they all of them ended up in the Gestapo chambers of torture. De Gaulle's links with the Resis-

tance became weaker. He was particularly worried about the growing influence of the Communist Party. The Military Committee of Action was now headed by the Communist Joinville. Commander of the F.T.P.F. was a representative of the Communist Party. Communists also had the last say in the executive bureau of the National Council of the Resistance.

De Gaulle had his suspicions about the Communist Party even before. His apprehensions increased after the forces of the Resistance freed the island of Corsica from the invaders in September 1943. Here too, the nucleus of the fighting force consisted of Communists. If they had any intentions of seizing power, they could easily have done so. However, being true patriots, they were above all concerned about the liberation of their country. Contrary to de Gaulle's suspicions, the Communists had no intention of weakening the common national struggle by splitting the fighters. Still, the liberation of Corsica strengthened de Gaulle's prejudice against the Communist Party. Now, the growth of the Resistance was a source not so much of joy as of concern to him. The violent anti-Communists Passy and Soustelle, in charge of the communications with the internal Resistance, naturally thought more of undermining the influence of the Communists than of supplying arms to the Resistance fighters.

In March 1944, de Gaulle tried to strengthen his control over the Resistance by including all of its fighting units in the so-called French Forces of the Interior (F.F.I.). The command of these forces was given to General Koenig. Having but a vague notion about guerrilla warfare, the General tried to reorganise the Resistance after the model of a regular army by forming large units out of small detachments. This led to useless destruction of major forces of the Resistance on the Glières Plateau and later near Verscors. The activities of General Koenig, Passy, and Soustelle could not ensure reliable control over the Resistance, which became an independent, mass war of the whole people against the invaders.

De Gaulle was convinced (or made believe that he was convinced) that the Communists would inevitably try to seize power at the time of liberation. That was the picture he painted for the benefit of the Americans and influential Frenchmen. Of course, the Communist Party did not intend to give up its ultimate goal, the socialist revolution. But the attainment of that goal was not regarded by the leadership of the Communist Party as the proximate practical task. Under the prevailing conditions it would have been no more than a highly adventurous undertaking. The Communists, just as the whole of France, Gaullists included, had one goal, the liberation of their country and the defeat of fascism. The activities of the Communist Party were in full agreement with the national interests in the widest acceptance. The Communists, just as the other parties of the

Resistance, supported the National Council of the Resistance programme of March 15, 1944, which de Gaulle himself accepted, though some of its points did not suit him at all, as they did not suit the Communist Party—though they were different points. The programme of the National Council of the Resistance envisaged the formation of a government headed by de Gaulle, renovation and democratisation of the bourgeois republic, restrictions on the absolute power of the big monopolies, and various social reforms. It resembled very closely the Popular Front's programme. The Communists supported it quite sincerely, with no idea of plotting a coup that de Gaulle accused them of. It is very doubtful that he should have believed in such a danger deep at heart.

If there was anyone quite ready to take power in his hands in liberated Paris and in the whole of France, it was, of course, de Gaulle himself. He had been preparing a plan for his enthronement in profound secrecy for many months. In his memoirs de Gaulle writes of his dream of appearing in Paris in the radiance of victory. Here, his true rival was not the Communist Party but the government of the U.S.A. He was, of course, afraid of the influence of the Communists, but the "danger" of the Communist coup was mostly a means he used to exert pressure on the Allies. Roosevelt still would hear nothing of recognising the French National Committee of Liberation as the government of France. Moreover, the Americans intended to establish in power the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (A.M.G.O.T.) until elections were held. De Gaulle decided to forestall the Allies' manoeuvres at any cost. He appointed beforehand 17 regional commissioners invested with extraordinary powers, general secretaries of ministries, and prefects of departments. These men would have to make their way illegally into occupied France and await the arrival of the Allied troops. As the troops moved in, they would occupy their posts. De Gaulle wrote that "they ... were ready at a moment's notice to rise out of the smoke of battle".

But de Gaulle did not know the main thing: just when the battle would begin. The second front would be opened any time now—there was no doubt about that. The main indication of the nearness of that event was the triumphant progress of the Soviet Army. It was clear that the Soviet Union was capable of routing Hitlerite Germany without help from the Allies. Now they were obliged to act. But the U.S.A. and Great Britain carefully kept secret from de Gaulle the date of the operation, the precise location of the landing, and other important details. True, on December 30, Eisenhower visited de Gaulle. The Allied Supreme Commander expressed regret about past misunderstandings and hinted that the operation was near at hand. De Gaulle insistently requested him to transport one French division to Great Britain and then land it in

France, for he could not arrive in Paris without his troops. Eisenhower promised that; he also stated that he would recognise no other power in France but de Gaulle's. This conversation pleased de Gaulle, but it entailed no changes in Roosevelt's policy. On the contrary, everything showed that the White House still refused to recognise de Gaulle.

Neither could he count on Great Britain's support. Early in 1944, the relations with the British became soured again. Spears' intrigues against French presence in the Levant became quite undisguised, while de Gaulle fiercely opposed them. Churchill said, in the presence of one of the members of the French Committee of National Liberation: "Ah, if only I had been able to make Mandel leave [France] in June 1940... When will de Gaulle cease to be insupportable, to snub me?"

Early in 1944 de Gaulle fell seriously ill. The villa Les Oliviers, where de Gaulle lived with his family, was closed to strangers, and the General's absence fed all kinds of rumours. Some said even that the General had died. He was rising 54 already, and his life was so full of emotions, conflicts, and constant nervous stress. He had coped with so many problems, and still his position was not solid enough. On the contrary, on the eve of liberation it became especially shaky. The General occupied his time with intense work, trips to the colonies, and later to Italy, avoiding the depressing thoughts about the intrigues of the British and the Americans, the successes of the Communists, and the excessive independence of the internal Resistance.

The General often vented his bad mood in angry remarks. Thus he told d'Astier, Commissioner for Home Affairs: "That Council of Resistance of yours... It is taking it easy, it is necessary to give them a push..."

His irritation and bad temper especially show through in an area where it is customary to be reserved and imperturbable under all circumstances—in diplomacy. The General was so haughty with the Allies that even his true supporters were nonplussed. On March 27, 1944, he stated in the Consultative Assembly that France needed no advice coming from abroad, and that it would ignore absolutely everything except the will of the French nation. He called his committee a Provisional Government for the first time, although no pertinent official enactment had taken place. It all looked as if de Gaulle himself at the head of his armies would liberate France, rather than American and British troops. The less confident he felt, the more assertive he was about his rights. But the newspapers of the Anglo-Saxon countries, maliciously commenting on his arrogance, also pointed out that he was suffering from an inferiority complex. He thrust himself both on France and on the United States. It was recalled that the emblem of France was the Gallic cock.

What did this policy of face-slapping lead to? On April 21, the British authorities forbade de Gaulle's representatives to use the diplomatic code. This measure was applied only to the French. It was not too terribly important in practical terms but extremely humiliating. Were the French suspected of being able to pass on to the enemy information about preparations for the landing? Infuriated, de Gaulle ordered his representatives to break off all relations with the Allies. He refused to receive the ambassadors of the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. The crisis reached its climax.

But on April 23, the British Ambassador Duff Cooper had de Gaulle informed that he had an announcement of extraordinary importance to make. De Gaulle had a change of heart and received the Ambassador. It transpired that the British government invited de Gaulle to London for talks on recognition of the Committee and organisation of the administration of France. De Gaulle stated that he was not interested in recognition, while negotiations about the administration of liberated France would be meaningless without the Americans. Simultaneously, de Gaulle was unofficially informed that Roosevelt would like to see him in Washington. The Allies seemed to be inclined toward concessions, and de Gaulle decided to go to London. But he was not going to return to Paris as part of the baggage of the foreign armies, so he issued an ordinance transforming the French Committee of National Liberation into the Provisional Government of the French Republic, not bothering to consult the U.S.A. or Great Britain, naturally.

On June 2, 1944, de Gaulle suddenly received a telegram from Churchill: "Please come as soon as possible and with the greatest secrecy; I give you my personal assurance that this is in the interest of France." Churchill even sent his personal plane *York* to fetch de Gaulle. Was it really that the policy of firmness was going to bear fruit, and de Gaulle's long struggle for asserting his rights would have the desired ending? On June 3 de Gaulle flew to London, trying to guess what surprise the Allies had in store for him.

On the morning of June 4, General de Gaulle arrived in England. On the airfield, he was handed Churchill's letter: "Welcome to these shores! Very great events will soon take place. I would be happy if you could come to see me here in my train... we shall then go to General Eisenhower's headquarters."

Churchill saw de Gaulle in the saloon-carriage of a special train on a side track some 40 km from Portsmouth. Why had the British Premier set up his headquarters in a train? Was he going to cross the Channel in this carriage? All this seemed a whim to de Gaulle, to say the least. Churchill, who had a weakness for historical associations, probably thought of the famous carriage in the Compiègne Forest where capitulation had been signed twice. But who was going to capitulate here? De Gaulle, perhaps? But the General was in a very resolute mood: he intended to stick to his guns. He had just learnt, with great indignation, that the Americans had already printed special occupation money for France, and that they had put men through two-month courses who would run French cities as prefects.

Churchill began with a highly coloured and inspired account of the coming immense landing operation in Normandy. It was as if the shade of Churchill's great ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough, had come to life. He then proceeded to business and suggested that de Gaulle should prepare an agreement on the administration of France during its occupation and set out for Washington with it to try to get Roosevelt's approval. "He will grow less adamant," Churchill said, "and will recognise your administration in one form or another."

De Gaulle replied: "Why do you seem to think that I need to submit my candidacy for the authority in France to Roosevelt? The French government exists. I have nothing to ask, in this sphere, of the United States of America nor of Great Britain. Once this is recognised... Furthermore, I notice that the Washington and London governments have made arrangements to do without such an agreement. I have just learned, for example, that despite our warnings, the troops and the services being prepared for the landing are provided with a so-called French currency, issued by foreign

powers, which the Government of the Republic refuses to recognise... I expect that tomorrow General Eisenhower, acting on the instructions of the President of the United States and in agreement with you, will proclaim that he is taking France under his own authority. How do you expect us to come to terms on this basis?"

Churchill was listening to de Gaulle with growing anger. The man whom he had given shelter in June 1940, the man who owed him everything, permitted himself this haughty tone, hinting, as always, at British inability to conduct an independent policy. That was too much.

"And you!" Churchill cried in anger. "How do you expect that the British should take a position separate from that of the United States?... We are going to liberate Europe, but it is because the Americans are in agreement with us to do so. This is something you ought to know: each time we must choose between Europe and the open sea, we shall always choose the open sea. Each time I must choose between you and Roosevelt, I shall always choose Roosevelt."

And that was the man who had lent a helping hand to de Gaulle back in the ill-fated year 1940, when de Gaulle had not a penny to his name, when he was, formally, just a deserter with the temporary rank of Brigadier General. Now that he had gained so much, he was cold-shouldered. And he had dreamed that the Allied landings on the French territory would be his triumph! In politics, however, there are no final achievements, merely endless movement from one stage to the next. He had to go on fighting, the more so that, unlike June 1940, he was backed by a government that he had himself established, a small but loyal army, and the support of the internal Resistance, however unreliable it might be. And tomorrow, he would at last stand on French soil again.

De Gaulle and Churchill then went to General Eisenhower's headquarters which were in a specially built hut in a close-lying forest. De Gaulle saw a large-scale map of France on the wall with arrows indicating the routes of ships, planes, armies, of hundreds of thousands of men now massed in England and ready to sail for the French shores at a word of command. De Gaulle recalled the spring of 1942, when he had worked out and handed over to the Allies the same kind of plan. Eisenhower explained the essence of the forthcoming operation clearly and in detail. The only item that remained indefinite was the date and hour of the landings. The weather had not been propitious so far. There were heavy seas in the Channel dangerous to small craft. Eisenhower asked de Gaulle if he would advise to delay the operation. De Gaulle said that he would not.

The conversation was drawing to a close when Eisenhower handed to de Gaulle the draft of his appeal to the peoples of Europe which he was going to make on the radio on the day of the

landings. Eisenhower asked de Gaulle to study it and to make comments on it, promising to take them into account. De Gaulle quickly read the text; he was flabbergasted. The appeal to the peoples of Norway, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg did not contain any political elements, since all these peoples had lawful governments based in Great Britain. The appeal to the French people sounded quite a different note. They were told to obey all the orders of the Allied command that was to be the supreme power until the French themselves elected their representatives and their government. The Provisional French Government headed by de Gaulle was not even mentioned.

De Gaulle's worst apprehensions were borne out. As he wrote in his memoirs, "over the clear prospect of battle had fallen once again the shades of a cunning policy". De Gaulle told Eisenhower that he was completely dissatisfied with the draft appeal and on the following day, June 5, sent a corrected text to the Supreme Commander. But he was told that it was too late, that an immense number of copies of the appeal had been printed which would be scattered from planes over French territory at night.

On the same day de Gaulle was informed that on June 6, on the day of Allied landings on the continent, there would be a special broadcast in which the King of Norway, the Queen of the Netherlands, the Duchess of Luxembourg, and the Prime Minister of Belgium would address their people. General Eisenhower would then read his appeal. It was suggested that de Gaulle should make his appeal to France after all the other speakers. De Gaulle declared that he was not going to take any part in that spectacle. If he spoke after the Supreme Commander, the impression would be created that he was in accord with the latter's statement, whereas in actual fact he was decidedly at variance with it. De Gaulle said that if he spoke at all, it would be independently and at some other time.

At two in the morning, Pierre Viénot, an old diplomat, his representative with the British government, came to de Gaulle. He said that Churchill had summoned him and poured out all his anger at de Gaulle's obstinacy and intractability. Churchill had thrown all restraint to the winds, he was in a blind rage and would hear nothing. The unfortunate Viénot had become a victim of the British Premier's frenzied indignation. De Gaulle sent Viénot back to Churchill with an explanation of his position. Viénot thus shuttled between Churchill and de Gaulle until five in the morning. On the morning of June 6, Churchill wrote de Gaulle a letter stating that his patience had run out and he demanded that the General should leave the British Isles. This letter never reached de Gaulle, for Eden decided to burn it. Churchill's outburst of mad fury passed, and de Gaulle was given a chance to speak separately, just as he had de-

manded, at six p.m. on June 6, 1944. Thus, neither the hot temper of the British Premier nor his position of a suzerain with regard to de Gaulle had been able to break the General down. Can it be that one of the minds and characters that conflicted here was stronger than the other? Most likely not: de Gaulle simply proved the more far-seeing. He knew that Churchill had no other way out. Who else could be entrusted with establishing order in such a troublesome country as France?

Some time before six p.m., General de Gaulle made his appearance in the hall of Bush House, the main building of the BBC. There was quite a crowd there, even several American generals among them. The row between de Gaulle and Churchill was common knowledge by now. Paying attention to no one, pale and tense, de Gaulle went to the studio. He was suddenly approached by Kirkpatrick, a responsible official at the BBC, asking him for a copy of the text which had to be censored on considerations of military and civil security. De Gaulle refused to hand over the copy, saying that he had to speak immediately, since he had reports that the Germans could switch off electricity in Paris. Kirkpatrick then said that the text was needed for translation and transmission to other countries. This argument seemed convincing to de Gaulle, and he produced a copy of the text.

Meanwhile Kirkpatrick quickly looked through the text and reported to Eden, who was worried about that speech, that it was O.K., except that de Gaulle spoke of the "French government" instead of the "provisional French government". Eden mused awhile and then said, with a laugh, that Sir Winston would have to swallow it.

General de Gaulle in the meantime spoke excitedly but firmly before the microphone: "The supreme battle has been joined... It is, of course, the Battle of France, and the battle for France! For the sons of France, wherever they are, whatever they are, the simple and sacred duty is to fight the enemy by every means in their power... The orders given by the French government and by the leaders which it has recognised must be followed precisely... From behind the cloud so heavy with our blood and our tears, the sun of our greatness is now reappearing!"

The French people heard two contradictory appeals. The Supreme Commander of the Allied forces called on them to behave quietly. The head of the Provisional Government, on the contrary, ordered them to hit out at the enemy as hard as they could. Eisenhower told them to obey no one but the Allied Command, while de Gaulle enjoined them to obey the French government. Besides, de Gaulle stated in London that the currency printed by the Allies was counterfeit money not recognised by the French government. De Gaulle decided that the French liaison officers would not

accompany the Allies' headquarters, not to help in the "usurpation".

In the meantime, the Allies successfully landed in Normandy, using their immense concentration of war machines and equipment. They consolidated their positions on a small bridgehead, massing their troops for further advance, the prospect of such an advance being favourable beyond any doubt, for Germany's main forces were hopelessly stuck on the Eastern front. Owing to the victories of the Soviet Army, the liberation of France began successfully. De Gaulle was naturally eager to set foot on the very first bit of free French soil. That had been, in fact, his main reason for coming to London. Earlier, Hitler and Pétain prevented him from coming to France, while now it was Churchill who did the same! He resolutely objected to the General's appearance on the liberated strip of Normandy.

Finally, after irksome delays lasting a whole week, the British cabinet gave its consent. De Gaulle and a small retinue of his subordinates crossed the Channel aboard the destroyer *Combattante*. At dawn of June 14, the *Combattante* cast anchor off the French coast. De Gaulle stepped aboard an amphibious vehicle and landed on a sandy beach, all ploughed up by caterpillar tracks, some 250 metres from the small Normandy port of Courcelles. General Montgomery, commanding the Allied forces on this bridgehead, placed several jeeps at de Gaulle's disposal. De Gaulle immediately appointed François Coulet, who had arrived with him, commissioner for the liberated territory of Normandy, and Colonel de Chevigné, commander of the military district. He ordered them at once to go to the town of Bayeux lying nearby, and to prepare the installment of the new authority and the meeting with the population. He himself went to visit General Montgomery briefly. Here, the meeting with the first liberated Frenchman took place; he happened to be a lean village *curé*, who said that he had heard de Gaulle's speeches on the radio and that he had always helped the patriots. He asked permission to shake the General's hand. Getting off the jeep, the General said: "*Monsieur le curé*, I shall not shake your hand but I shall embrace you."

The embraces over, they set off again and suddenly saw two gendarmes riding on their bicycles towards them. Charles de Gaulle stopped the car, and the gendarmes, noticing the General's stars, hopped off their bikes and saluted. He spoke to them: "I am General de Gaulle. My friends, I am going to ask a service of you. I am going to Bayeux. Will you be so kind as to make a detour and warn them of my arrival. We shall not budge from here for a quarter of an hour." The gendarmes hurriedly mounted their bikes and rushed off to carry out the errand. Watching them go, de Gaulle said: "Recognition has come." The Church in the person of the

curé and the State in the persons of the gendarmes, had recognised de Gaulle's authority!

On his arrival at the town the General was met by François Coulet, the mayor, and the members of the municipal council. De Gaulle got off the car and, surrounded by a crowd of delighted urchins, walked towards the centre of the town, returning the greetings of the inhabitants. In the Place du Château de Gaulle made a speech before the crowd that had gathered there. The local bishop (who was the first to be received by de Gaulle) sanctified the establishment of the new authority by singing the *Te Deum*.

The ceremony of handing over the power took place in the premises of the sousprefecture. The Vichy sousprefect Rochat was replaced by the hurriedly elected Raymond Triboulet, a major local landowner. Unfortunately, the new sousprefect had no full dress uniform. Seeing that Rochat was of about the same height as he, Triboulet asked him for a loan of his uniform. The latter willingly agreed, but then suddenly remembered that the buttons of his uniform were stamped with *la francisque*, the symbol of the Vichy state... Thus there was a radical change in the powers that be—except for the buttons!

Everything that happened on June 14, 1944 in the little Normandy town was entered in the annals of Gaullist history, in a highly romanticised form, of course, as an event of exceptional importance. De Gaulle himself, in describing the first meeting with liberated France, asserted: "The proof was given. In metropolitan France as well as in the Empire, the French people had shown to whom they entrusted the duty of leading them." Strangely, the General, who had a fine feeling for irony, sometimes completely lost all sense of humour and proportion.

Returning to London on June 15, de Gaulle, satisfied by his reunion with France, wrote a courteous conciliatory letter to Churchill. The latter immediately replied with assurances of his friendship and expressions of hope that good relations would also be established between de Gaulle and Roosevelt. Eden informed de Gaulle of his desire to work out, at long last, together with Viénot, an agreement on the controversial issue of power in France. On June 16, de Gaulle flew to Algiers, and ten days later, he set out for Italy to inspect the French forces operating there. In Rome, de Gaulle was received by Pope Pius XII. The Vatican had not recognised Free France, maintaining close links with the Vichy regime. Accordingly, the French Catholic Church lent Pétain unqualified support. In his memoirs, de Gaulle described his meeting with the Pope in the reverential tones of a devout Catholic. However, even this description, reminiscent of the well-remembered lessons of a Jesuit college, could not conceal the mundane meaning of the visit to the Holy See. De Gaulle endeavoured to get the

Vatican's cooperation in attracting the French Church to his side. That was all the more important since the Consultative Assembly in Algiers had decided to give the vote to women, who made up the majority of believers.

But the main purpose of de Gaulle's trip to Italy was elucidating France's role in the war. He was convinced that it was the decisive factor in France having a say in settling the problems of the postwar world and winning the status of a great power. De Gaulle then had 300,000 in the Army, the Navy, and Air Force: an insignificant figure compared with the multi-million armies of the great powers. De Gaulle was therefore all the more concerned with effective employment of his limited resources. In Italy, everything went well. The three divisions of the French expeditionary force commanded by General Jouin had gained considerable victories. In particular, the French troops may be said to have played the decisive role in the fighting that led to the taking of Rome, and in other operations. On June 18, de Gaulle received a telegram sent by General de Lattre directly from Napoleon's house on the island of Elba; the island had just been occupied by the French forces. And there was a straight route from the island of Elba along the Rhone to Paris, once traversed, with great triumph, by the Emperor.

It was this famous route that was under discussion now. The Allies could not agree on where to go after the liberation of Italy. Churchill firmly insisted on advancing across the Balkans towards the countries of Eastern Europe. De Gaulle was against these plans, pointing to the difficulty of passing through mountain-masses and the fact that the American mechanised armies were little adapted to movement across mountainous terrain. He supported the American plan for operation Anvil, which envisaged landings on the southern coast of France, the taking of Marseille and Toulon and advance towards Paris. Here, the French forces could take an active part in the liberation of France. In Italy, de Gaulle met representatives of the High Command of the U.S.A. and Great Britain, sounded out their intentions, and tried to convince them of the expediency of accepting the American project Anvil.

Immediately after his return from Italy, de Gaulle left for America. His trip to the U.S.A. had been a matter of discussion several times already. The Americans raised no objections to the General's visit, yet the invitations had each time been hedged with various reservations, and it had been implied that de Gaulle would come as a suppliant. But he believed his positions to be too weak for him to allow himself such a luxury. The visit had been delayed time and again. In December 1942, de Gaulle was turned back when he was on his way to the airdrome already: he was informed that the trip had been cancelled. In recent times, however, the Americans' tone had changed noticeably, and the invitation was in full

earnest. President Roosevelt sent his personal plane to Algiers to fetch de Gaulle. In his *War Memoirs* de Gaulle repeatedly stressed that the Americans had tried to get him to come, that they "literally beseeched" him to agree to a meeting with the President who "redoubled his insistences that I visit him", etc. It looks as if he was indeed very eager for a meeting with Roosevelt, although their previous encounter in Casablanca in January 1943 had not impressed him any too favourably. In the days before the trip, de Gaulle did not conceal his satisfaction. One of de Gaulle's closest and most constant associates asserts that he had never seen the General in such a jolly mood, so highly unusual for him, as during the visit. De Gaulle rushed the trip, having learnt that in August the Allies would begin a major offensive on French territory; the way would then be open to Paris.

On July 6, 1944 Roosevelt, all smiles, received de Gaulle in the White House. After tea, the President had a long conversation with de Gaulle. In the next two days the conversations continued. Recalling them later, de Gaulle wrote that he had "discovered how becoming optimism is to those who can afford it", emphasising that President Roosevelt "did not doubt for a moment that he could". It is very uncertain, however, that Roosevelt could win de Gaulle's heart. In his talks with the French guest, the President tried to avoid the burning issues of their relations. He preferred to elaborate his grandiose plans for establishing a world order headed by a four-partite directorate—the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and China—which would rid the world of troubles, involve Russia in the community of the Western nations, and ensure peace and the triumph of democracy. Independent states would emerge in Asia and Africa. America would render material aid to the needy. And, to defend peace, American military bases would be built everywhere, as for instance in the French colonies (former colonies!). Those dreams sprang from an unprecedented growth of American might.

Listening to the inspired tale of the wonderful future of mankind, as Roosevelt pictured it, de Gaulle gave this talented man his due. "It was by light touches that he sketched in his notions, and so skilfully that it was difficult to contradict this artist, this seducer, in any categorical way..." wrote de Gaulle. Yet he made this comment on the President's speech: "As was only human, his will to power cloaked itself in idealism."

De Gaulle resolutely opposed Roosevelt's project, pointing to the dangers of such a plan to the West. In the first place, he could not agree to the idea of giving the colonial peoples their independence, for he believed that they must remain "in association" with the metropolitan countries. And if the liberation movement were to be directed against the colonial powers, that would stoke up hatred

towards foreigners amongst the unorganised masses and anarchy dangerous to the whole world.

De Gaulle spoke particularly resolutely against the exclusion of France from the club of the great powers. He expressed gratitude for the US intention of rendering material assistance to France. But he said: "I know that you are preparing to aid France materially, and that aid will be invaluable to her. But it is in the political realm that she must recover her vigour, her self-reliance and, consequently, her role. How can she do this if she is excluded from the organisation of the great world powers and their decisions, if she loses her African and Asian territories—in short, if the settlement of the war definitively imposes upon her the psychology of the vanquished?"

Roosevelt showed an understanding of de Gaulle's ideas, he radiated cordiality and good nature and expressed sympathy with France in her misfortunes, yet with the same charming smile he expressed sentiments which somehow were reminiscent, accidentally as it were, of his former comments on de Gaulle's "Messiah complex": "But it is true that to serve France no one can replace the French people."

When the conversation touched on the political future of France and the fate of her political leaders, Roosevelt remarked in passing: "For the moment, you are there, and you see with what kind attentions my country welcomes you. But will you still be there at the tragedy's end?"

Behind the President's affability and courtesy, and particularly behind his optimistic projects for the well-being of the planet under US aegis, de Gaulle sensed a harsh and rigid political course determined entirely by US interests. He drew a very significant conclusion from this, one that confirmed his constant and firm belief in the priority of the national factor over any ideas, theories, slogans and principles. "The American President's remarks ultimately proved to me that, in foreign affairs, logic and sentiment do not weigh heavily in comparison with the realities of power; that what matters is what one takes and what one can hold on to; that to regain her place, France must count only on herself."

Some time later, Roosevelt thus assessed his meeting with de Gaulle, and de Gaulle himself, in a private letter: "De Gaulle and I ... have examined in outline the subjects of the day. But we talked more deeply about the future of France, its colonies, world peace, etc. In relation to future problems he seems quite 'tractable', from the moment France is dealt with as a world power. He is very touchy in matters concerning the honour of France."

During his visit to America, de Gaulle went to see New York and Canada, where he made trips to Montreal and Ottawa; he met a great many people and was present at a great number of ceremonies, banquets, receptions, and meetings. He made many speeches.

Everywhere he received expressions of sympathy with France, though many were surprised by the General's far from typically French appearance and manners. In any case, everywhere he inspired curiosity and interest, feeling himself to be the focus of attention of the crowd, which invariably gave him a sense of elation and satisfaction.

On July 13 he returned to Algiers, and here he got that which had been the main object of his trip. The day before, the US government published a declaration: "The United States ... recognizes that the French Committee of National Liberation is qualified to exercise the administration of France." Although that was not an official recognition of the Provisional Government, one of the major obstacles to the establishment of its power in France was eliminated. But France herself remained a matter of considerable concern.

Pounded by the Allies at the front and attacked by countless Resistance detachments in the rear, the German army, furiously fighting back, withdrew from the territory of France. On August 18, the Allies broke through the German front in Normandy and moved at a repaid pace deep into French territory. The American and French forces that landed on August 15 on the southern coast of France were also rapidly advancing. The moment came when the new power had to be established in France, for the Vichy regime was disintegrating along with the enemy occupation. The Allies had recognised de Gaulle's right to rule France, if only temporarily. But would France accept his authority? That was the main issue at stake now. It was in these days that the prefects and regional commissioners, sent to France beforehand, had to begin performing their tasks. But de Gaulle was most of all worried about Paris, for the question of who would rule the country would be settled there. De Gaulle saw that there was no one in France with any chance of competing with him. He was at last recognised by the Allies, and the Resistance had recognised him even before. Yet he saw new dangers to the realisation of his plans.

The first of these dangers lay in the attempts to evolve some kind of state structure through a combination of the Vichy regime and the remains of the state institutions of the Third Republic. The idea of this preposterous hybrid was propounded by Pierre Laval, head of the Vichy government, in a last desperate attempt to save his political existence. However strange it may seem, his idea was simultaneously encouraged by the Germans and the Americans. But the participants in that shady transaction could not reach an agreement. Besides, it was too late, for American troops were at the gates of Paris, and in the capital the populace rose in arms against the occupation forces. However that may be, de Gaulle was seriously apprehensive about Laval's manoeuvres.

Another danger, which de Gaulle believed to be even graver, lay in that the Communists, who led the mass Resistance organisations, allegedly intended to seize power in Paris, setting up there, as he wrote, "a kind of Commune", "the dictatorship of what was called the proletariat", "an authority dominated by the Third International". De Gaulle's apprehensions were the result of a complex play of his emotions, views and intentions partly based on a failure to understand the policy of the Communist Party, and partly, on its conscious or unconscious distortion. In actual fact, the Communist Party had no adventurist plans for establishing "the dictatorship of the proletariat" at the moment of liberation of Paris. The Communists realised that an acute inner conflict at this concluding stage of the struggle against Nazi occupation could not help the destruction of fascism, which they believed this to be their prime task. The Communists' immediate practical intentions did not go beyond the implementation of the Programme of the Council of National Resistance of March 15, 1944. They coincided with the aspirations of the Socialists, Left Radicals and Catholics, and of the whole democratic mass of the Resistance fighters. In the final analysis, the whole of the French people strove for a new and democratic France in which progressive social reforms would be implemented and the power of those forces that had led the country to the horrors of war and occupation would be restricted. Intent on opposing the Communists, de Gaulle insisted that the inevitable reforms and changes should not affect the social substance of the bourgeois system or interfere with the assertion of his personal authority, without which he believed it impossible to restore the greatness of France. That was the meaning of de Gaulle's vigorous activity begun on his arrival from Algiers to Maupertuis, whence he immediately set out for the headquarters of General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces. General Koenig, who met de Gaulle, told him during the ride about the situation in Paris as described in the reports of Parodi and Chaban-Delmas, de Gaulle's representatives there. The people were spontaneously heading for an armed uprising there. As early as August 18, the Communist Party proposed that the National Council of the Resistance should call the population to arms. But Georges Bidault, Chairman of the National Council of the Resistance, and Parodi believed an uprising to be premature and dangerous. They were guided by de Gaulle's directive that the uprising should begin at the moment when the French armoured division command by General Leclerc, specially intended to maintain "order" in Paris, entered the capital. In a word, de Gaulle realised that the situation in Paris was very complex and required that reliable troops should appear in the city as soon as possible.

General de Gaulle arrived at Eisenhower's headquarters in an

uneasy mood that was in sharp contrast to the optimistic atmosphere surrounding the Supreme Commander. Eisenhower informed de Gaulle of successful advances of the American and British columns. But none of them headed for Paris, which greatly worried de Gaulle. He declared that his government was above all interested in the fate of Paris, and that he therefore asked Eisenhower to send troops there, and in the first place Leclerc's division. Eisenhower replied that it was too early to move on Paris, and that a battle in the capital would lead to great destruction and loss of life. Then de Gaulle directly expressed his apprehension that "every sort of upheaval [was] likely" in Paris. Eisenhower promised that he would soon order an advance on the capital. Not quite satisfied by that vague promise, de Gaulle said that, if Eisenhower should procrastinate, he would himself direct Leclerc's division to move on Paris.

De Gaulle's insistence was obviously due to the fact that his representatives in Paris Parodi and Chaban-Delmas had failed to avert a mass armed uprising against the invaders, which broke out on August 18. In twenty-four hours, the Resistance fighters controlled three-fourths of the capital. Parodi executed an unexpected manoeuvre. Through the mediation of the Swedish consul Nordling, he concluded an armistice with General von Choltitz, the German commander in Paris. It turned out that the German command also had apprehensions about maintaining "order" in the French capital. This sort of solidarity reminds one of the cooperation between Thiers and Bismarck during the Commune. On the morning of August 19, an order was issued in the name of the Provisional Government of France to "cease fire at the occupying troops". The order was taken by the patriots who had risen in arms as some kind of a misunderstanding, and was not actually carried out. Nevertheless the armistice introduced confusion and delayed the triumphant conclusion of the uprising by two days.

De Gaulle, who did not for a moment forget the danger of "anarchy" in Paris, again insisted on advancing on Paris. This time the American Commander ordered Leclerc's French armoured division to drive towards the capital. On August 23, de Gaulle went to Rambouillet, a small town some 30 km distant from Versailles, where he met Leclerc. He approved the plan for the division's entry into the city and directed Leclerc to set up his headquarters at the Montparnasse Railway Station and to await de Gaulle's arrival there. On that day de Gaulle carefully read the Resistance newspapers brought from Paris: *L'Humanité*, *Combat*, *Libération*, *Franc-Tireur*, *Front national*. They were all of them imbued with the fighting spirit, with hopes for and faith in the renovation of France. Their content was reflected, for instance, in the epigraph of *Combat*: "From the Resistance to the Revolution", of *L'Humanité*:

"Workers of all countries, unite!" De Gaulle's intention to keep the Resistance from seizing power and to put an immediate end to revolutionary hopes became even stronger. In the castle of Rambouillet, de Gaulle worked out his plan for appearing in the capital, which had to signify the establishment of firm state order.

On August 25, when Leclerc's division entered Paris already liberated by the people, de Gaulle paced the terrace of the Rambouillet castle impatiently awaiting Leclerc's hourly reports. Finally receiving the report that the city was controlled by the French forces and that von Choltitz was ready to capitulate, de Gaulle set out for the capital by car. He had carefully thought out the line of his behaviour in liberated Paris: "I would mold all minds into a single national impulse, but also cause the figure and the authority of the state to appear at once." At four p.m. he arrived at the Montparnasse Railway Station, where all was indescribable confusion. Soldiers rubbed shoulders in the crowd with fighters of the internal forces wearing picturesque clothes tattered and singed in the fighting. Many had flowers in the muzzles of their rifles. There were also many women here, often armed but wearing clothes that seemed frivolous to de Gaulle. What sort of masquerade was it! He much preferred the orderly ranks of the regular army on parade.

In one of the waiting-rooms, under an enormous timetable, de Gaulle was met by General Leclerc, who was not quite fit for a parade either. He was the first to receive de Gaulle's congratulations on the victory, although Colonel Rol-Tanguy standing next to him had done more to deserve the honour: he commanded the Resistance detachments that had by themselves liberated the city, opening the way to Leclerc's division. He handed de Gaulle the text of the act of von Choltitz's capitulation. But what was that signature? Rol-Tanguy? But that meant that the Germans had surrendered to a Communist! De Gaulle read a lecture to Leclerc on the spot: "First of all, that is not exactly true. Secondly, you were the highest-ranking officer in the matter, therefore the only person responsible. But above all, the insistence which has led you to admit this formulation proceeds from an unacceptable tendency." De Gaulle showed Leclerc a proclamation published the same morning by the National Council of the Resistance in behalf of the "French nation" and making no reference to General de Gaulle.

The General was told that the members of the National Council of the Resistance and of the Paris Committee of Liberation were awaiting him at the City Hall. The City Hall, the headquarters of several revolutions, of the Commune? That won't do. Three automobiles took de Gaulle and his retinue, protected by an armoured car, to the Rue Saint-Dominique, to the War Ministry. At five p.m. they came to the place where de Gaulle had served as Undersecretary in Reynaud's government and which he hurriedly left on

June 10, 1940 together with his chief. Nothing had changed here, and the events that had shaken the world had left this venerable building completely untouched. A platoon of the Republican Guards saluted him in the court as usual. Sentries were posted at the doors as usual. The hall, the staircase, the pictures, the decorative suits of armour were all in their old places. Not a single chair, carpet or curtain had been changed. De Gaulle noticed that the telephone was in the same place as ever, and the names next to the bell buttons were all the same as ever. De Gaulle writes: "Nothing was missing except the state. It was my duty to restore it: I installed my staff at once and got down to work."

De Gaulle received the prefect of the police Luizet and his civil representative Parodi. He explained to them their main task: restoring public order and bringing in supplies. All the barricades had to be dismantled immediately, he ordered.

Parodi reminded the General that he was expected at the City Hall. But de Gaulle first intended to inspect the Paris police and set out for the prefecture. True, the policemen had joined in the uprising in the last days, but they still could hardly be counted among the heroes of the Resistance. De Gaulle looked with sympathy at the *flics* "whose service had kept [them] on the spot under the occupation". The policemen replied to the General's speech with enthusiastic cheers. Only now did General de Gaulle drive towards the City Hall.

He was met by the representatives of those who had liberated Paris, friends of the dozens of thousands of those who had been shot and tortured to death by the fascists. While the *flics* whom de Gaulle had just greeted had servilely saluted SS officers, these men had shot at them. De Gaulle was greeted by Georges Marrane, Chairman of the Paris Committee of Liberation, a Communist. De Gaulle later recalled: "I did not see a single gesture or hear a single word which was not of perfect dignity. How admirable the success of a meeting long dreamed of and paid for with so many efforts, disappointments, death! "

Where was the "anarchy" which the General had fancied? Order reigned here, democratic order and the noble spirit of the Resistance of the whole people. Somebody suggested that de Gaulle should step out on the balcony and proclaim the Republic before the enormous crowd gathered in the Place de Grève, as was once done by Lamartine, by Gambetta. In 1871, the Commune was thus proclaimed! But this traditional act of many revolutions was not at all to de Gaulle's taste. In general, the word "revolution" disappeared from his lexicon, although not so long before he had used it in London and Algiers. But now, in reply to the offer to proclaim the Republic he declared: "The Republic has never ceased. Free France, Fighting France, the French Committee of National Liberation have

successively incorporated it. Vichy always was and still remains null and void. I myself am the President of the government of the Republic. Why should I proclaim it now?"

De Gaulle thereby made it clear that law and order already existed, embodied in his government, and there could be no question of building something different. De Gaulle merely appeared in the window and greeted the crowd with a gesture. After that he returned to the War Ministry in the Rue Saint-Dominique. He had to prepare for the next day. The next day would bring something really worth living for! According to a carefully worked-out plan, de Gaulle would triumphantly march, surrounded by the comrades-in-arms, from the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile (now Place de Charles de Gaulle) to Notre-Dame, and he, the liberator and saviour of the country, would be greeted by the people of Paris! True, many expressed doubts about the expediency of this pompous pageant; the Germans, only some 80 km away from Paris, were preparing a fierce bombardment, possibly even with V-rockets. But de Gaulle was convinced that that risk must be taken: he had to get the acclamation of the people of Paris in pursuance of his "intention of accepting no investiture for [his] authority save that which the voice of the people would give [him] directly".

The pageant did indeed promise to be a grand one, for the liberated Parisians' sincere joy needed no encouragement. Although neither the underground nor any other kind of transport worked, crowds of pedestrians surged towards the Champs-Élysées in the morning. On Saturday, August 26, 1944, at three p.m., General de Gaulle drove to the Arc de Triomphe, where he was awaited by the members of the government, of the National Council of the Resistance, by generals, prefects, commanders of the Resistance. De Gaulle kindled the flame at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The unusually broad avenue, framed on both sides by boulevards, was filled by dozens of thousands of people. The people were everywhere—on balconies, in the windows, on lanternposts, trees... Cries of greetings, the singing of the *Marseillaise*, the thunder of orchestras... De Gaulle, surrounded by his closest associates, walked to the Place de la Concorde and then on to Notre-Dame de Paris. The atmosphere was one of high emotion, and somehow touchingly human, as it was not much of an official parade, and police cordons were conspicuous by their absence. De Gaulle towered above those surrounding him. He was calm and reserved, but he was marching at such a pace that his comrades followed him nearly at a run. From time to time he raised his hands to greet the crowd. It was not for nothing that he had once, in his book *The Edge of the Sword*, placed such emphasis on the contacts between the leader and the masses, citing Hamilcar, Caesar, and Napoleon. This pageant, where the spontaneity and naturalness of the crowd's emotions were

harmoniously combined with de Gaulle's calculated moves, is probably something rare even in the history of France so rich in picturesque and grandiose scenes.

Of special interest are the feelings of de Gaulle himself. This pageant was probably the most joyous and solemn moment of his life, a triumph of which he had dreamed, which he had prepared and achieved. Of interest is also his extremely original view of his own role, his attitude to the nation, to the country, to France. Charles de Gaulle writes in his *War Memoirs*: "Since each of all those here had chosen Charles de Gaulle in his heart as the refuge against his agony and the symbol of his hopes, we must permit the man to be seen, familiar and fraternal, in order that at this sight the national unity should shine forth..."

"I went on, then, touched and yet tranquil, amid the inexpressible exultation of the crowd, beneath the storm of voices echoing my name, trying, as I advanced, to look at every person in all that multitude in order that every eye might register my presence, raising and lowering my arms to reply to the acclamations: this was one of those miracles of national consciousness, one of those gestures which sometimes, in the course of centuries, illuminate the history of France... And I myself, at the centre of this outburst, I felt I was fulfilling a function which far transcended my individuality, for I was serving as an instrument of destiny..."

"At each step I took along the most illustrious avenue in the world, it seemed to me that the glories of the past were associated with today's. Beneath the Arc de Triomphe, the flame burnt brightly in our honour. This avenue down which a triumphant army marched twenty-five years ago opened brilliantly before us. On his pedestal, Clemenceau, whom I hailed in passing, looked as if he were springing up to march beside us. The chestnut trees of the Champs-Élysées that the Eaglet, in prison, dreamed about and which had seen for so many, many years the grace and prestige of France displayed beneath them offered themselves now as joyous grandstands to thousands of spectators. The Tuileries, which framed the majesty of the state under two emperors and two monarchs; the Place de la Concorde and the Place du Carrousel, which had observed the frenzies of revolutionary enthusiasm and the reviews of conquering regiments; the streets and the bridges named after battles won; on the other bank of the Seine, Les Invalides, its dome still sparkling with the splendour of Le Roi-Soleil, the tombs of Turenne, of Napoleon, of Foch; and the Institute, honoured by so many illustrious minds—these were the benevolent witnesses of the human stream that flowed between them. Here, in its turn, was the Louvre, where the succession of kings had also succeeded in building France; on their mounts, the statues of Joan of Arc and of Henri IV; the Palace of Saint Louis, whose anniversary had occurred

the day before; Notre-Dame, the prayer of Paris, and the Ile de la Cité, her cradle—all shared in the event. History, gathered in these stones and in these places, seemed to be smiling upon us."

This passage is very interesting in that it strikingly expresses de Gaulle's mind, character, psychology, in short, personality. He who says that there is a great deal of ambition and egoism here is quite right. But it will be no mistake to say that it also shows a sense of great responsibility and the joy of serving his ideal. De Gaulle sees himself in the focus of a great historical event, but he does not feel himself to be its demiurge or master: he is rather an instrument of fate and carrier of a special mission. He is listening to the loud echoes of sounds which he first heard in his childhood. Imagine again the ten-year-old boy fascinated by Rostand's *The Eaglet*. He remembers it now! Neither must we forget the youth charmed by the poesy of Charles Péguy and Maurice Barrès; their verse sounds in his soul on August 26, 1944, almost half a century later. But all of this is merely the finale, the solemn concluding chords of a real historical play in which our hero, without any romantic illusions, resorted to scheming, cunning, perfidy, firmness and, which is most important, his far-sightedness in serving the cause whose success he celebrated with all his triumphant soul! The history of France with its upsurges and tragic falls, which has inspired Charles de Gaulle since his youth, meets him here face to face.

A politician of astonishing realism here shows the other, romantic side of his soul, which was the secret of his charisma. Like a talented artist, he does not simply play an assumed role: he also solves at the same time a "supertask". In the same idiom, we may say that he does not play in a performance born of the imagination of a playwright but in the drama of real human existence; he acts not on the boards of a theatre but on the great and sinful soil of France tortured by the enemy and covered with gore, and now illumined with the light of the joy of liberation. To use a comparison once coined by de Gaulle himself, we may say that here, as in Chopin's music, suffering gives birth to a dream.

De Gaulle's dreams clothed in magnificent historical symbols are not, however, strong enough to lift him from the earth. He does not go woolgathering and neither is he ecstatic. Even de Gaulle's historical reminiscences are permeated with the spirit of restoration. His mind pictures the images of the kings who "built France"; marching across the Place de la Concorde, he does not recall scenes from the revolutionary history of France but the poor King and Queen of France who were guillotined there. There are characteristic details about the August 26 pageant that are not at all accidental: they are rather elements of a persistently implemented political plan. On de Gaulle's left during the march along the Champs-Élysées walks Joseph Laniel, an industrialist from Normandy, who

once voted for handing power over to Pétain and later joined the Resistance. He represents the classical type of a conservative, narrow-minded bourgeois. To the left of him is Georges Bidault, a prominent figure in the Catholic Party, who became Chairman of the National Council of the Resistance after the death of Jean Moulin and later moved only to the Right, and kept sliding that way until he became an out-and-out fascist. Behind de Gaulle walk the generals Jouin and Koenig, typical representatives of the old militarist caste. And where are the heroes of the Resistance, its courageous and fearless leaders, where are the leaders of the glorious uprising in Paris that made that splendid pageant possible at all? Somehow you do not see them much, for it is not seemly that Communists should be in the proscenium of the historical drama as staged by de Gaulle, although it was the Communists who led the most militant and numerous detachments of the Resistance.

About half past five, de Gaulle reaches the Notre-Dame de Paris. Regrettably, Monseigneur Suhard, the Cardinal, is not there to meet him. The thing is that some four months before he solemnly received there Marshal Pétain. The Resistance fighters would be indignant at his appearance there, although de Gaulle himself "should willingly have overlooked such things". A solemn prayer of thanks is then read.

In his words, de Gaulle was profoundly satisfied, for he had received a vote of trust from the people, and his popularity, built up by the broadcasts from London and increased by his uncompromising struggle against the Allies for the national interests, was now sanctified by the "voice of the crowd". The whole of the description of the events of August 26 is very much like the ancient chronicles narrating the coronations of French kings. De Gaulle stresses, in particular, that the whole thing took place without foreigners and even despite them, for the American command believed the ceremony to be inappropriate in a city so close to the front and even forbade Leclerc's division to waste time in these games. De Gaulle writes that only Frenchmen took part in this purely national emotional outpouring symbolised by himself.

One vexing detail spoils this idyllic picture, however. De Gaulle does not mention it in his memoirs, but this lapse of memory can be filled in from General Eisenhower's book *Crusade in Europe*. On August 27, that is, on the day following the celebration, during which the nation expressed "unlimited" trust in de Gaulle, he thought it necessary, for some reason, to approach General Eisenhower with an insistent request: "He asked for the temporary loan," writes the American General, "of two American divisions to use, as he said, as a show of force and to establish his position firmly... Here there seemed a touch of the sardonic in the picture of France's symbol of liberation having to ask for Allied forces to

establish and maintain [his] position in the heart of the freed capital."

However that might be, the capital of France was liberated. Unlike many European cities, it was virtually untouched by destruction. All the monuments of France's grandeur, so dear to de Gaulle's heart, had survived. Moreover, the Germans, who had at one time tried to win the sympathy of the French people, had gilded the statue of Joan of Arc and even brought from Austria and ceremoniously entombed in Les Invalides the remains of Napoleon's son, Duke of Reichstadt, the legendary Eaglet. Hunger-stricken Paris joked then: "What we want is not bones but meat."

Indeed, France, not yet fully liberated then, had been plundered by the enemy. The railways did not function, the Germans had stolen more than half of France's rolling stock and had blown up thousands of bridges. The industries worked at less than one third of their prewar capacity. Nearly two millions of young Frenchmen were either imprisoned or deported to Germany as slave labourers. The country was in the grip of general chaos and famine. True, you could find anything you liked in the black market and at posh restaurants, but the prices were fantastic; only those could afford them who had profited by the war. There was profiteering everywhere, and sabotage by former Vichy supporters. The bourgeoisie refused to resume business activity. It was frightened by the Resistance, by its profoundly democratic and socialist character. The power of the ruling class, disgraced by collaboration with the enemy, was undermined. The whole of the old social structure was shaken and was on the point of collapse. Who was going to save it?

That was the mission which de Gaulle took upon himself; sincerely desiring to restore France's greatness, he did not intend to create some new social basis for that greatness. Its old, traditional basis, the bourgeois social structure, seemed to him to be the only one suitable for France, although the overwhelming majority of the French nation held a different view at the time of liberation. Now he began to rule liberated France, which, in his words, "excluded any authority that paralleled my own". The central task, which he tackled most vigorously, became liquidation of any tendencies towards participation in the administration of the country on the part of the Resistance, that very Resistance without which he would never have been able to get rid of Giraud, or get the recognition of the Allies, or enter Paris as the liberator of the country.

France's postwar history began with a distressing and stunning insult to the Resistance. The man who declared on June 18, 1940, "the flame of French resistance must not, and shall not die", and who went down in history by that act, now started hurriedly extinguishing that flame. Resistance fighters got a resounding slap in the face from the man believed to be the leader of the Resist-

ance. Discarding all sentiment, General de Gaulle liquidated the Resistance.

On August 28, 1944, he summoned 20 chief leaders of the Parisian underground fighters and declared to them that the F.F.I. forces were to be abolished, that they would have to surrender arms, and that the Resistance fighters would have to enlist in the regular armed forces. De Gaulle announced to the representatives of the National Council of the Resistance that "as soon as Paris was torn from the enemy, the National Council of the Resistance would be a part of the glorious history of the liberation, but would have no further *raison d'être* as an organ of action. The government would assume entire responsibility".

Following the liquidation of the F.F.I., on September 15, the people's tribunals were also dissolved. On October 28, the decision was taken to dissolve and disarm the partisan guards and the militia. The Resistance continued to exist as political organisations only, such as the National Front and the Movement for National Liberation (*Le Mouvement de Libération Nationale*, or M.L.N.). In the summer of 1945, the National Congress of the Resistance—the States General of the French Revival (*Le Congrès national de la Résistance—les États Généraux de la Renaissance française*) was organised. These organisations, just as the political parties, strove to implement the programme of the National Council of the Resistance of March 15, 1944. Far from supporting that activity, de Gaulle openly opposed it, believing that it undermined the unity of the nation and the power of the state—the only basis of national revival. Any attempts to revive the spirit of the Resistance, any political demands of its organisations and the press were regarded by de Gaulle as useless and even harmful opposition to the state.

Having consolidated his power in Paris, de Gaulle immediately proceeded to do the same in the provinces. About half the French territory was liberated without any help from the American and British troops. The French Forces of the Interior, that is, the Resistance forces, were half a million strong in the autumn of 1944. Apart from Paris, they liberated Marseilles, Lyons, Toulon, Toulouse, Montpellier, Limoges, Clermont-Ferrand and many other cities. The Resistance organisations naturally established their power in these cities, for they could not, of course, leave it in the hands of the Vichy administration. The process was not without certain excesses on the part of various anarchist and Leftist elements. But de Gaulle ascribed these excesses to the whole of the Resistance, particularly the Communists. His conservative views, adherence to the traditional pillars of "law and order", his anti-plebeian instinct—all of this raised a wall of misunderstanding and alienation between him and the Resistance. In reality, the great majority of the Resistance men, and especially the Communists,

were not at all in favour of anarchy. That was why they had agreed to hand the power over to de Gaulle, although they did not approve of many of his actions. That was why de Gaulle was able to establish his authority in Paris and later in the provinces. Paradoxically, the Resistance which de Gaulle now openly slighted, still remained his main support.

In the two months after the liberation of Paris de Gaulle made a series of trips through the provinces. On September 14, he arrived at Lyons and found the situation there quite normal. He then visited Marseilles, but the position there produced quite a different impression on him.

However, in Marseilles and everywhere else no one interfered with de Gaulle establishing in power prefects and commanders of military districts, although the latter were often regular army officers and generals who had served in the Vichy army. From Marseilles de Gaulle went to Toulon, and on September 16 he was in Toulouse. Here, as de Gaulle wrote, "leaders of the armed units constituted something like a soviet". That was, of course, not so, for otherwise de Gaulle would hardly have succeeded in cancelling the directive dismissing the gendarmes, in entrusting them with maintaining law and order again, and appointing General Collet, recalled from Morocco, commander of the military district. He then visited Bordeaux, Sète, Orléans, consolidating everywhere the authority of the state. On September 25 he was at Nancy in Lorraine, where, as he recognised himself, "law and order ran no risk of infringement".

During the trip, de Gaulle involuntarily came to see the necessity of those very democratic and social reforms which the Resistance demanded. On the occasion of the visit to his native city of Lille he wrote: "Sentiment and reflection had already convinced me that the liberation of the country must be accompanied by a profound social transformation. But in Lille I discerned its absolute necessity stamped on the faces of the people. Either there would be an official and rapid move to institute a marked change in the conditions of the working people, and profound limitations upon financial privilege, or the embittered and suffering mass of workers would founder upon those disturbances which risked depriving France of what remained of her substance."

De Gaulle became even more convinced of that when he visited later the coal-mining areas of the north, then Normandy, Brie, and Champagne. In the span of several weeks, de Gaulle made a tour of almost all of the country's major centres. Everywhere he saw a tottering social structure, a people exhausted by the war, and fervent hopes for the revival and renovation of France. But the main conclusion he drew from all this again bore the stamp of his class positions. It became clear to him that, as he put it, the people

"would still have to endure long and arduous trials which party demagoguery and Communist ambition would not fail to exploit for their own purposes".

What were the purposes of the Communist Party, which had become known among the people, aptly and tragically, as "the party of the machine-gunned", through its heroic struggle and sacrifices during the Resistance? This largest and best organised party, which had control of hundreds of thousands of armed partisans, had as its only goals the complete liberation of the country, restoration of the economy, and democratisation of the country. Its demands did not go beyond the programme of the National Council of the Resistance of March 15, 1944. It did indeed fight for the realisation of that programme, but it had no intention of seizing power, neither could it have any such intentions, for they would be plain adventurous.

Then why did he constantly suspect the Communists of perfidy, why did he ascribe to them conspiratorial intentions and ambitious claims? This was prompted above all by de Gaulle's profound anti-revolutionary instinct, undoubtedly complemented by political calculations. What better way for winning the favour and loyalty of the bourgeoisie, which made up half the population of the country, than the stance of a defender of its interests? To enjoy unlimited power at a time of restoration of the elementary norms of democracy, de Gaulle had to appear as the man who had saved the country not only from the external enemy, Nazism, and not only from the external rivals, the U.S.A. and Great Britain, but also from the enemy within. If such an enemy did not exist, it had to be invented. Thus the myth was born of the mysterious but extremely dangerous revolutionary designs of the Communist Party, of its preparations for a coup, for seizing power and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. He thus extensively used the class bias of the broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie.

It should also be borne in mind that in his *War Memoirs*, written in 1950-1958, de Gaulle obviously exaggerated his anti-Communist tendencies of the liberation period. The *Memoirs* were a political document intended to win the trust of the dominant forces and prove his ability to become again their saviour. As we shall later see, this plan worked out in precisely the way de Gaulle had intended. But at the time of which we speak here de Gaulle cooperated with the Communist Party, although to a rather limited extent.

This cooperation also continued after the changes in the Provisional Government announced on September 9, 1944. The Communist François Billoux, who had been Minister for the Occupied Territories, now became Minister of Public Health. Air Ministry was also headed by a representative of the French Communist Party. Apart from the Communists, the government now included three

Socialists, four Radicals, and three "People's Democrats" (Catholics). There were also eight members of prewar parliament in it. Jules Jeanneney, former President of the Senate, who had once voted for Pétain, was appointed de Gaulle's deputy. There were quite a few bankers and industrialists in the government (Diethelm, Lepercq, Mayer). In short, the government was quite a motley crowd with contradictory tendencies. Although there were Communist ministers in it, it was by no means a government of the Popular Front with a common platform. Instead of the platform, there was the supreme and still unlimited power of General de Gaulle. As before, the Consultative Assembly, now twice its former size, could not pass decisions that would be binding on the government.

On September 12, in a long speech at the Chaillot Palace before eight thousand representatives of the Resistance organisations, organs of the state, political parties, trades unions, and business circles, de Gaulle presented his plans. He said that his government would run the country until the end of the war and the return of prisoners-of-war and deportees, when general elections to the National Assembly would be held, which would decide the country's future fate. Many of de Gaulle's intentions coincided with the National Council of the Resistance programme. He promised democratisation, punishment for the traitors, confiscation of the collaborationists' property, nationalisation of some major branches of the economy, maintaining stable prices, and raising living standards. He even announced his intention "to subordinate private interest to public advantage; to exploit the natural resources of the nation and administer them to the general advantage". De Gaulle underlined, however, that the government would "encourage in all matters the spirit of enterprise". He thus made it clear that there could be no question of changing the country's social structure.

De Gaulle declared his most important goal to be ensuring the greatness of France through consolidating her international position, and active and extensive participation in the war, and a foreign policy that would permit France to take part in settling the future of Germany and of the whole world.

De Gaulle's speech was received with a storm of applause. He wrote, however, that "the calculated and composed faces that acknowledged my remarks, reminded me that 'politicians', old or new, had many nuances in their approbation. It was apparent that their dealings would be complicated, as they proceeded, by an ever greater number of reservations and conditions". The General's forebodings were fully borne out.

"I've saved the house, and even some of the furniture." In these words General de Gaulle summed up his activity during the war and immediately after it. The third volume of de Gaulle's *War Memoirs*, narrating the events between the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1946, is called *Salvation*. Let us see what he saved, and how. The word "salvation" seems to cover best of all de Gaulle's foreign policy. Many believe that he achieved his greatest successes in this area. Indeed, foreign policy figured most prominently in de Gaulle's activity as head of the Provisional Government. Its results cannot be described in one word, but one thing is beyond doubt: after the liberation of Paris de Gaulle continued to fight persistently for consolidating France's prestige, for its interests and for restoring it to the rank of a great power. But that goal was still remote.

In the autumn of 1944, representatives of the four big powers conferred at Dumbarton Oaks on the founding of the future United Nations Organisation. France was not represented at that conference. The European Advisory Commission of the U.S.A., Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. had been in session for more than a year in London, and France was not a participant there either. The heads of the three great powers conducted negotiations almost continuously at that time—in person, through correspondence, or through diplomatic channels. As a rule, France was not even informed of these talks. That was a natural consequence of the 1940 defeat. For de Gaulle, however, this inferior position of France was a source of endless torment; for a start, he decided to join somehow the negotiations between the great powers, the more so that on October 23 the first real basis for this was established: the governments of the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom officially recognised de Gaulle's Provisional Government. As far as the Soviet Union was concerned, there was nothing particularly novel about it: Moscow had earlier recognised de Gaulle's government *de facto*. For the U.S.A., however, that step involved a rejection of its previous policy. In any case, de Gaulle was studiously indifferent to this belated recognition, as it fell far short of what he intended. At a press conference on October 25 he was asked about his impressions as to the recognition of the government by the Allies. To this, he

replied coldly: "The French government is pleased that it is to be called by its name."

De Gaulle's plans in foreign policy were extremely far-reaching. In the first place, the problem of eliminating German danger had to be dealt with by sharply reducing the strength of Germany and, if possible, dividing it. As a long-range perspective, he saw France as the centre of the new order in Europe. "After the terrible lacerations she had undergone in the last thirty years," he wrote, "and the vast changes which had occurred the world over, Europe could find equilibrium and peace only by an association among Slavs, Germans, Gauls and Latins." He envisaged a unity of Europe which "could be established in the form of an association including its peoples from Iceland to Istanbul, from Gibraltar to the Urals". Here, as at all other times, de Gaulle's views were determined by history and geography.

But the beginnings had to be modest. On October 30, de Gaulle invited Churchill to Paris. Simultaneously an invitation was sent to Roosevelt, but it was not accepted. On November 10, Churchill and Eden arrived at Paris. Immediately, negotiations began in de Gaulle's office in the Rue Saint-Dominique.

First of all de Gaulle raised the question of supplies for the French army. The British promised nothing substantial. They also avoided concrete discussion of the occupation of Germany, the future of the Ruhr, Rhine, and Saar provinces, which de Gaulle wanted to separate from Germany. Churchill was also evasive on the question of Syria and Lebanon, where Franco-British frictions never ended. But Churchill proposed to begin at once negotiations about a Franco-British alliance.

De Gaulle at once agreed in principle, but he started a discussion on the nature of that alliance. He pointed out that France and even Great Britain would come out of the war much weakened, and they therefore would have to act in close unity in solving the problems of tomorrow. That would enable them to play the decisive role, taking into account the rivalry between America and Russia. Many small countries would join the Franco-British alliance, to oppose the two giants. The Franco-British treaty would only have meaning on this basis, in de Gaulle's view. But Churchill gave him to understand at once that he would not dream of weakening the links with the U.S.A. for the sake of an alliance with France. The choice between de Gaulle and "the open sea" was mentioned again. "...It is better to persuade the stronger than to pit yourself against him," said Churchill. He did not want to act in concert with France at present, speaking of better times to come. "Until then, leave matters in my hands," he concluded. The negotiations ended in failure.

In Paris, Churchill was present, along with de Gaulle, at a

military review in the Champs-Élysées on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the victory in the First World War. He was favourably impressed by the smart-looking French troops. The crowd warmly greeted the British Premier wearing the uniform of an Air Force general. He responded just as warmly, giving his famous V-sign. As the crowd noisily expressed its delight, de Gaulle whispered, spitefully and angrily, to a minister standing next to him: "Just you listen to them! The idiots! They acclaim that *canaille!*"

In no other sphere was de Gaulle so sensitive to his failures as in foreign affairs. These affairs lay particularly close to his heart. For him, all of France's internal problems were ultimately reduced to the question of her greatness, that is, her influence and prestige. In dealing with any problem, he proceeded from the interests of consolidating France's international position. He was more acutely sensitive to France's isolation than anyone else, particularly now when he stood at last on French soil. Alas, it only increased the feeling of inferiority of the France that he headed. Previously, the limited resources of France seemed something natural. It was naturally assumed that the liberation of France's territory would immediately provide the strength he lacked. So far, however, only new complex problems arose, while France's weakness was more conspicuous than ever. Of course, de Gaulle could now raise a million-strong army, but where was he to get arms and equipment for it? The U.S.A. and Great Britain waved aside de Gaulle's requests. Economic devastation made him seek help from others. The internal political situation also remained unstable and indefinite. The U.S.A. and Great Britain had no intention whatever of restoring France to the status of a great power. Nothing remained to him but waiting and hoping for the future. But, as de Gaulle once remarked, "the future lasts a long time". The man of action, as described by de Gaulle already in the book *The Edge of the Sword*, is doomed if he is passive, if he does not act.

In what direction was he to act, where could he find support? History and geography, de Gaulle's constant instructors, prompted him with one voice that the path to restoring France's greatness lay through Moscow. But that meant that he would have to seek support in a world alien to him in its social nature. Quite recently, Monseigneur Roques, the bishop of Rennes, head of the church in Brittany, had told him directly that the Catholic prelates were uneasy about his closeness to the Communists. The omnipotent men of the business world also gave him to understand that he could only win their support by ruthlessly fighting Communism. De Gaulle again sensed the "spirit of Vichy", he saw the ineradicable inclination of the men of his own social background for sacrificing the national interests at the least hint of danger to their class

positions. Even the shameful breakdown of Vichy had not taught them anything. So he again had to do something that was psychologically reminiscent of the courageous choice of June 18, 1940. History had confirmed that he had been right. It would justify him again, when he proved that the Kremlin would provide the basis for the restoration of the greatness of France. That was the decision he made.

In his memoirs General de Gaulle writes that he hoped "to renew the old Franco-Russian solidarity which, though repeatedly betrayed and repudiated, remained no less a part of the natural order of things, as much in relation to the German menace as to the endeavours of Anglo-American hegemony. I even envisaged a pact by virtue of which France and Russia would commit themselves to act in common if Germany should ever become a threat again. This dangerous hypothesis would probably not be realised, at least not in the foreseeable future. But the signing of a Franco-Russian treaty could help us to participate at once in the elaboration of the European settlements".

But de Gaulle decided from the outset that there could be no question of any one-sided orientation. The main thing was retaining complete independence of France's policy with regard to any partner, particularly if the partner was very strong. The General believed independence in foreign policy an even more important factor in the politics of greatness than the number of divisions, the amount of steel produced, or the total of currency reserves. De Gaulle thought it necessary to assert his independent orientation publicly in a speech on November 22 at a session of the Consultative Assembly. Europe's fruitful unity, he said, must be translated into specific acts binding its three poles, Moscow, London and Paris.

By that time, the question of his trip to Moscow had been settled through diplomatic channels. The Soviet government had shown an understanding of de Gaulle's wishes and extended him an official invitation. Moreover, in early November it demonstrated its goodwill towards France by insisting on including her representative on the European Advisory Commission.

On November 24, de Gaulle, accompanied by Bidault, Minister for Foreign Affairs, General Jouin, Palewski and Dejean, flew to the Soviet Union. After touching down at Cairo and Tehran, he landed on November 26 in Baku, where he was accorded an official reception. The General was given the proper military honours. At the ceremony of receiving the report of the guard of honour and reviewing its ranks, de Gaulle was delighted by the appearance of the Soviet soldiers. During the two weeks of his stay in this country, de Gaulle was shown many things. He saw the tragic and awe-inspiring ruins of Stalingrad and the famous, fascinating Rus-

sian ballet, powerful industrial enterprises and research institutes, boundless Russian spaces and the fairy-tale architecture of the Kremlin. But the soldiers produced the greatest impression on him. He was in raptures about their drill, sturdy looks and quiet courage, carefully describing later the aspect of the units that formed the guard of honour that met the French guest. There is something not unlike delight mixed with envy in his concluding words: "Here indeed was the eternal Russian army."

His impressions during the visit to this country, his judgements and evaluations were tinged, as ever, with his specific worldview. Although he recognised that the October revolution and the Soviet power had created a new and powerful Russia, he perceived it as the eternal sacred mother Russia. In his perception, eternal France and eternal Russia met now, outside of any ideologies or social differences. This approach was, of course, far from an objective view of the situation. Yet it may very well be that, by pushing into the background the opposition of the socio-political structures of France and the U.S.S.R., it facilitated the cooperation between the two countries.

On December 2, the French delegation arrived in Moscow by train, and on the same day de Gaulle was received by Stalin. The General had had quite a great deal of experience of talks with major political leaders, such as Churchill or Roosevelt. He now met another, and the most unusual, member of the great Three. De Gaulle had long mastered the art of the highly important dialogue. He believed that one had to speak as little as possible, and that silence was psychologically more advantageous than verbosity. As a rule, de Gaulle let the partner speak, while he himself made very few remarks, and at a precisely calculated moment, when the words assumed particular weight and significance. In this case it turned out, however, that Stalin was even more adept in the art of imperceptible silence. The stenographic records of their conversations show that de Gaulle this time spoke much more than his interlocutor.

"During the fifteen or so hours which comprised the total of my interviews with Stalin," wrote de Gaulle, "I discerned the outlines of his ambitious and cryptic policy. As a communist disguised as a Marshal ... he was a past master of deception. But so fierce was his passion that it often gleamed through this armour, not without a kind of sinister charm."

De Gaulle's certainty that he had understood the gist of Stalin's policy does not appear all that unquestionable, however.

During the talks in Moscow, de Gaulle first of all raised the question of concluding the Franco-Soviet treaty. De Gaulle's ideas about the pernicious consequences for France of an absence of an alliance with the U.S.S.R., and about the common interests of the

two countries in Europe, met with Stalin's complete understanding. As a matter of fact, even the draft treaties which the two sides exchanged proved to be very similar. As a result, the question of a treaty of alliance in itself was settled at once. However, when the negotiations were in full swing, Churchill unexpectedly sent Stalin a telegram with an offer of a trilateral treaty of alliance between the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom, and France. De Gaulle saw at once the meaning of his British friend's manoeuvre, who feared France's excessive independence, and categorically rejected Churchill's proposal. Stalin, who made at first no objections to this suggestion, agreed with de Gaulle.

The Frenchmen's greatest concern was with the destiny of Germany: their desire to make German aggression impossible once and for all coincided with the intentions of the Soviet side. But differences in the methods came to light. The Soviet Union believed it necessary to demilitarise Germany entirely, and to eradicate fascism and militarism. As for de Gaulle, he mostly insisted on detaching the Ruhr, the Rhine and Saar provinces from Germany, on handing over the territory of the left bank of the Rhine to France, and on transforming the unified German state into a system of separate small states. Without going into the substance of the problems, Stalin stated that they could not be settled without participation of the U.S.A. and Great Britain, and de Gaulle had to agree with that.

But there was one stumbling-block in the negotiations—the question of Poland. At that time, there existed the anti-Soviet Polish government in exile in London and the Polish Committee of National Liberation set up by patriots in liberated Poland itself. Stalin suggested that de Gaulle should recognise that committee, to facilitate the creation of a Poland friendly to the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet side met France half-way in the matter of the treaty, it was natural to expect a goodwill gesture in return. De Gaulle declared, however, that he could not recognise the Lublin committee, for the Polish government should be established only through elections after the liberation of the country. In other words, de Gaulle took absolutely the same stand with regard to Poland which Roosevelt had taken towards himself, refusing to recognise him, which had caused de Gaulle's understandable indignation. As a result, the signing of the Franco-Soviet treaty, already agreed upon, could now be frustrated.

Time did not stand still. December 9 came, and on the next day the French had to leave, but the talks were at an impasse. In the evening, Stalin gave a dinner in honour of de Gaulle. De Gaulle speaks at length in his memoirs on this dinner, writing of the 30 toasts proposed by Stalin. Yet, despite the excellent fare and the hospitality of the Russians, de Gaulle was in a bad mood. He

obstinately objected to the recognition of the Polish Committee of Liberation, and that made the signing of the Franco-Soviet pact impossible. He would thus fail to acquire a basis for an independent policy and for restoring France to the rank of a great power. What would the effect be on his position within the country? He gloomily admitted to one of the workers of the French embassy: "It will be a defeat for me, and a grave one." Deep at heart, though, de Gaulle hoped against hope, for the Soviet Union was also an interested party, as independent and influential France would counterbalance the Anglo-Saxon powers.

At midnight, de Gaulle took leave of Stalin and departed for the French embassy together with Bidault. Maurice Dejean and Roger Garreau stayed on at the Kremlin. They continued the negotiations. De Gaulle waited at the embassy. Finally, Dejean appeared at two in the morning with news of a possible compromise: the Russians would be satisfied by a simple exchange of representatives between Paris and Lublin. At four in the morning de Gaulle returned to the Kremlin, and the treaty of alliance and mutual assistance was ceremoniously signed. Stalin suggested that the event should be celebrated, and the tables were laid again in the twinkling of an eye. Stalin raised his glass to France. De Gaulle wrote in his memoirs that Stalin told him then: "You have played well! Well done! I like dealing with someone who knows what he wants, even if he doesn't share my views..." De Gaulle invited Stalin to come to France: "Will you come see us in Paris?" Stalin answered: "How can I? I'm an old man. I'm going to die soon."

The signing of the Franco-Soviet pact was joyously acclaimed in France. It was warmly approved by newspapers of all tendencies. The Consultative Assembly unanimously welcomed it as France's great achievement. On December 21, de Gaulle made a special speech to the Assembly, in which he showed the enormous significance of the treaty. "For France and Russia," he said, "to be united is to be strong; to find themselves separated is to find themselves in danger. It is, in fact, a categorical imperative of geography, of experience, and of common sense." De Gaulle declared that the role of the Soviet Union in the war and its attitude to France "raised to a new height the age-old sympathy that we French have always felt towards the Russian people".

The Moscow Treaty of December 10, 1944 was an exceptionally important event in the history of French foreign policy. Alfred Grosser, a French specialist in foreign affairs, thus characterised de Gaulle's policy at the end of 1944: "Three different motives seem to have led him to search for an alliance with Moscow. In the first place, the fear of Germany, mentioned six times in the text of the treaty concluded with Russia rather than with the Soviet Union, since the General saw it as a traditional and classic alliance, similar

to the one that existed between the Third Republic and the Czar. Next, the desire to affirm his independence from the Anglo-Americans. Finally, considerations of internal policy: whatever he may say in 'Salvation', it is impossible that he should not have equally conceived of the treaty of Moscow as a means to ensure the unity of France that had to be rebuilt."

The signing of the Moscow Treaty consolidated de Gaulle's authority. He himself commented, not without some astonishment, on the "general euphoria". France's democratic circles saw the treaty as something much greater than what de Gaulle associated with it. He believed it to be merely the restoration of an old Franco-Russian alliance, while the circles of the Left saw in it a potential for a serious change in the very character of French foreign policy, for transforming it from an instrument of imperialist interests into a democratic and progressive policy. Proceeding from his historical conceptions, de Gaulle actually did more than he had set out to do. It is a different matter that these new perspectives opened up by the Franco-Soviet treaty later proved to be cancelled by the anti-Communist tendencies of the French ruling circles. But even before the treaty had lost its value through those tendencies, it proved very advantageous for France. It was largely the conclusion of the alliance with the Soviet Union that restored France to the status of a great power. That was attained thanks to Soviet support, which could not be discounted by the Anglo-Saxon countries. Soon after, at the conference of the three great powers in Yalta, it was decided to set aside an occupation zone in Germany for France, and to include France in the Allied Control Council along with the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom. Besides, France became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. At the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945, France was included along with the three other great powers in the Council of Foreign Ministers that would deal with problems of peaceful settlement. This sensational restoration of the rights of a defeated country with its rather insignificant participation in the war, and that only at the final stage, caused astonishment. During the signing of the Act of unconditional surrender of the German armed forces, a rather telling episode occurred. When the representatives of the German army were taken into the hall where that historical ceremony took place, Field-Marshal Keitel, seeing the French General de Lattre among the victors, exclaimed, "What? The French, too?"

Thus the restoration of France to the rank of a great power, achieved largely through the Franco-Soviet treaty, meant something much more than "some of the furniture". For this reason, irrespective of de Gaulle's attendant subjective emotions, he brought a fine gift for France from the U.S.S.R. In concluding the treaty with the

U.S.S.R., de Gaulle again served the cause of France's national interests. He attained the stature of a major political figure capable of finding promising diplomatic solutions.

Strangely, the same "historical" method of decision making, taking into account historical experiences and traditions, sometimes prompted de Gaulle completely unrealistic steps in foreign policy. That was what happened with de Gaulle's policy on the German question. He demanded that the territories on the left bank of the Rhine should be separated from Germany and handed over to France, to ensure the security of the French borders. This demand was an obvious facsimile of the "natural frontiers" policy propounded already by Henri IV and Richelieu. But the experiences of the war, when crossings over all the major rivers of Europe, with the exception of the Volga, had been forced, had shown that, given modern war machines, this method of ensuring French security had long become obsolete. It seemed particularly strange when suggested by a man who had, on the eve of the war, showed so profoundly and shrewdly the significance of technological progress for the military art in his book *Towards a Professional Army*. As a matter of fact, even his earlier works, in which he justly pointed out that mobile operations rather than defence lines would ensure France's security, invalidated his policy with regard to Germany at the end of World War II.

To ensure France's security, de Gaulle also demanded a partitioning of Germany, its transformation into a system of semi-independent countries, or "federalisation". But in 1870, France was defeated by a divided "federal" Germany, not a unified one. Finally, his policy on the German question was devoid of elementary realism, for he opposed the other three great powers all at once, so that he had no chances of success at all.

De Gaulle tried to pressure his partners. The first half of 1945 was marked by a series of petty diplomatic scandals instigated by de Gaulle, who obviously overestimated their usefulness. For example, he took umbrage in connection with the conferences at Yalta and Potsdam, where he was not invited, since the Big Three club had taken shape long before. Although the decisions of the two conferences included some elements that were to France's great advantage, de Gaulle declared each time that he was not bound by them. De Gaulle's presence in "the club of the great" was objected to by Roosevelt, who therefore became the focus of the General's resentment. When the American President was coming back from the Crimea, he suggested to de Gaulle a meeting in Algiers. In reply, de Gaulle said that he could not "receive him there", thus refusing to meet him. That caused considerable discontent in France. Roosevelt, speaking in Congress about the results of the Yalta Conference, referred to "certain 'prima donnas' whose whim had

prevented a valuable discussion".

De Gaulle's conflicts with Churchill were much graver, as usual. Syria and Lebanon were again the bone of contention. The population of these countries rose in arms against the French, who had long declared their independence but were in no hurry to leave the Middle East. The British intervened in the conflict. Churchill sent de Gaulle an ultimatum, demanding an end to hostilities and the handing over of the control of these countries to Great Britain. De Gaulle had to give in, but he made this statement to the British Ambassador on June 4: "We are not, I admit, in a position to open hostilities against you at the present time. But you have insulted France and betrayed the West. This cannot be forgotten."

But the conflicts with the U.S.A. and Great Britain increasingly contradicted the principal orientation of France's foreign policy. The fact is that this policy began to change under the impact of impoverished France's rising economic dependence on the United States, which had grown rich and fat. In 1942, the Americans began to supply France with arms. In February 1945, an agreement was signed on extensive aid to France on the lend-lease system. In August 1945, de Gaulle again went to the U.S.A. to beg for another installment of aid. He was now met by the new President, Harry Truman, whose attitude, as de Gaulle saw it, was "remote from the vast idealism which his illustrious predecessor had developed in the same office". The former haberdasher indeed proved to be a very practical man. He promised de Gaulle a loan of \$ 650 million, agreed not to interfere in the restoration of French influence in Indo-China, and promised certain things in Germany. To cap it all, he also made him a gift of an excellent plane, DC-4 (Roosevelt had made him a present of a car) and awarded him the U.S. Legion of Merit order. Truman's generosity was very simply explained: he needed de Gaulle's support in breaking up the anti-Hitler coalition and preparing the "cold war". De Gaulle was inclined to join him in that task.

Not long before, he had developed the ideas of European cooperation "from Gibraltar to the Urals", but now he proposed a bloc of West European nations only. The new orientation was clearly revealed already on September 10, 1945, in an interview granted by de Gaulle to the *Times*. He also spoke of the need to improve relations with the United Kingdom. Thus already under de Gaulle there were signs of France becoming a member of the emergent Western political bloc and not a mediating link between the West and the East. Unlike the U.S.A., though, de Gaulle had in mind a bloc of the West European countries under the aegis of France. De Gaulle himself referred to his project as an "immense plan". He was pained to observe, though, "that the French political leaders did not, in fact, greatly favour it". There was a glaring

incongruity between the "immense plan" and the extremely limited reserves and resources of France, which was already beginning to live at U.S. expense.

De Gaulle's foreign policy gradually lost the integrity and clarity it had during the war. He then had quite a definite task, the restoration of France's independence and greatness. Now, a Western bloc with a clearly anti-Soviet purpose was on the agenda. France was fighting desperately to retain her colonies and to get some of the German territories, which compelled her to look for support to the U.S.A. and Great Britain. Combined with France's grave economic situation, all of this undermined the basis of de Gaulle's independence in foreign policy, which roused discontent within the country. In the third volume of his *War Memoirs* de Gaulle writes that various categories began to withdraw from him, and that he "was profoundly affected by this initial dissension". The bourgeoisie was worried about de Gaulle's "excessive" independence from the U.S.A. and Great Britain, while the democratic circles, about the increasingly clear orientation at the Western powers only. As a result, de Gaulle's foreign policy by 1945 weakened, rather than consolidated, his political positions within the country.

That was a unique period in French history. The Resistance had brought about a revolutionary upsurge unprecedented since the Commune. Just as in those times, the working people became, in de Gaulle's words, "patriots and revolutionaries too". The parties of the working class, the Communists and the Socialists, enjoyed the support of an immense number of the French. Nevertheless, unrestricted, absolute personal power remained in the hands of de Gaulle, a man of conservative and even, perhaps, half-monarchist convictions. That was a very strange "concubinage", with the Left and de Gaulle not merely coexisting but even cooperating. The conscious policy of compromise on the part of the Communists was natural and understandable, but for General de Gaulle, the policy of alliance with the Left was something out of the ordinary. Here again he displayed qualities which made his personality stand out from his native social environment, though he remained firmly bound to it. What brought these contradictory class forces together? The common ground for this rapprochement was, first, the patriotism of de Gaulle and of the Left, of the Communists above all, and second, the realism of the political thinking of these two disparate partners of a marriage of convenience.

The two badly suited "spouses" lived together through the hard, hungry winter of 1944, under the conditions of devastation and chaos when the smallest sparkle, it seemed, might kindle the revolutionary flame. There was no formal agreement between them with any precise, concrete obligations. In their silent cooperation, each of the sides watched the other suspiciously. Showing astonish-

ing intuition and skill, de Gaulle made social concessions—always within limits that enabled him to count on the loyalty of the Left while leaving the foundations of the bourgeois system completely intact. This unstable equilibrium continued for a short while only, and when de Gaulle lost his sense of the limit beyond which he could not go, the equilibrium broke down. But, before that happened, a great deal had changed in France.

To keep the nation "on the right course", de Gaulle took the social initiative in his hands, declaring the slightly changed demands of the Left, recorded in the programme of the National Council of the Resistance, to be his own ideas. The main item on the agenda was nationalisation. In December 1944, General de Gaulle issued an ordinance on the nationalisation of the coal mines of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments. Then the major automobile and aviation enterprises, the merchant navy, civil aviation, and oil and gas refineries were nationalised. These were followed by the Bank of France, the largest deposit banks and insurance companies. There was no question, however, of violating the sacred principle of private property; the owners were guaranteed, without too much publicity, some form of compensation or other. Only the Renault plants passed on to the state without compensation to the owner, for the latter had openly collaborated with the Germans. True, Louis Renault had died of a heart attack in 1944 at the first rumour of nationalisation.

Under de Gaulle, the basis of state management of nationalised industries was laid, and even of a degree of regulating the economy as a whole. De Gaulle set up a High Commission on Plans for Equipment and Modernisation. In August 1945, he founded the National School of Administration. There was a marked increase in the development of technocracy, that is to say, the power of highly trained managers who managed, in particular, to make nationalisation highly profitable for the bourgeoisie. Thus, meeting the demands of the programme of the National Council of the Resistance, de Gaulle simultaneously created the basis for the postwar development of state-monopoly capital.

Still, de Gaulle had to make quite a few tangible concessions to the workers. A reform of the system of social security was begun, and the workers' wages were increased. But prices grew much faster. Industrial production grew some two and a half times between September 1944 and January 1946, but the unbelievably low living standards remained the same. The working class toiled selflessly to restore the country, while the bourgeoisie was only concerned with keeping its privileges. In this situation, de Gaulle always proved to be on the side of the privileged, in the final analysis. Someone had to make sacrifices to take the country out of the economic decline, and that someone was always the working

people, whose position was grievously affected by the endless inflation.

De Gaulle objected even to the purely capitalist measures for improving the country's financial position. The resignation of the Radical Mendès-France, the Minister of Economy, is a case in point. He suggested a monetary reform of the type carried out in many liberated countries, with money exchanged only in strictly limited amounts for each individual, bank accounts blocked, etc. Mendès-France thus tried to curb inflation, to confiscate mountains of money accumulated during the war by the racketeers, and to paralyse the black market. This reform naturally affected the interests of those who had made fortunes during the occupation. Mendès-France's reform was furiously opposed by Lepercq, banker and Minister of Finance, and later Pleven who replaced him. De Gaulle did not support Mendès-France in this highly significant controversy, and the latter had to resign. The General is said to have asked Mendès: "Yes, but aren't all the experts against you?" To which Mendès-France replied: "I know a certain Colonel de Gaulle who, before the war, had all the experts against *him*"

Indeed, before the war, his was the thankless role of a lonely rebel against the top military caste. Perhaps now, when his policy objectively helped to maintain the privileges of the bourgeoisie, he was no longer alone? That was not so: as destiny would have it, he was again in isolation. The fact is that the influence and authority of those who might have liked his policy had weakened drastically. A new system of political parties had emerged, in which the conservative, frankly bourgeois trends played but a modest role. They were now paying the price of their collaborationism and support for the Vichy regime. De Gaulle watched with concern the growing influence of those political parties on whose support he could not count.

The Communist Party grew especially strong. The Communists' heroic struggle against the invaders had brought the party well-deserved authority. Its membership was nearing one million. At the end of the war, the Communist Party supported General de Gaulle in everything that concerned the consolidation of France's independence and her economic recovery, but it resolutely rejected that in his activity which contradicted the interests of the working class and the democratisation of political life.

The Socialist Party had also extended its influence, though by no means in the same degree as the Communists. During the war, the Socialists actively supported de Gaulle, and some of them, like André Philip, were the General's close associates. But this alliance was, of course, temporary. In 1945, the Socialists often acted together with the Communists.

The third largest party was the Popular Republican Movement,

or M.R.P. (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*). The product of the merging of various Catholic organisations, it was now led by Georges Bidault, de Gaulle's Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although officially that party supported the programme of the National Council of the Resistance, it proved to be much farther to the Right than the other major parties. In fact, it replaced the prewar Right wing. The M.R.P. declared itself to be a "party of allegiance to de Gaulle", but in its struggle for power and political influence it could not serve as a reliable support for the General, in the long run.

The Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance, or the U.D.S.R. (*Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance*), which emerged in 1945, proved to be closest to de Gaulle. It comprised many Gaullists, including the General's closest associates. But this small party had no serious influence. The prewar Radical Party also revived, though its influence was badly undermined by the Vichy activities of many of its leaders. The Radicals were in favour of restoring the Third Republic system and opposed to the General if only for that reason. There also existed all sorts of fragments of prewar Right-wing parties, including the group of Independents headed by de Gaulle's former patron Paul Reynaud. But the French bourgeoisie failed to establish a major Right-wing party after the war.

General de Gaulle never had any trust in political parties at all, and especially not at that time: "I saw the clouds," he wrote, "gathering on the horizon and henceforth advanced in an atmosphere heavy with criticism and objections."

There had been signs of this long before the end of the war. And on March 19, 1945 a delegation from all the groups of the Consultative Assembly came to de Gaulle with the demand that the government should consider its opinions. De Gaulle replied that he alone had power and that he would exercise it in behalf of France and be answerable to France alone, until general elections were held after the war. But the war was soon over, so elections had to be announced and the country's future system settled. De Gaulle had no special hopes that the elections would lead to maintaining or consolidating his power. At the same time he did not try to keep his absolute power by refusing to hold elections and resorting to force. He himself explained it in this way: "I had every apparent justification for prolonging the sort of monarchy which I had recently assumed and which the general consent had subsequently confirmed. But the French people was itself, and not any other; if it did not desire such a regime nothing could impose it. ...Only the Army could furnish me the means of controlling the country by constraining the recalcitrant elements. But his military omnipotence, established by force in peacetime, would soon appear unjustifiable to adherents of every tendency."

General de Gaulle therefore decided to fulfil his promise and to let the people express its will in a general election. He believed this to be the only way of implementing his intentions, and these went far beyond just staying in power. For that, he merely had to conform to some extent to the rules of the parliamentary game and the traditional political mores. But he wanted to keep power only if that game and those mores were done away with through imposing severe limitations on republican democracy. He wanted to crown his career by establishing the kind of political structure which was, in his view, most suitable in the struggle for the greatness of France. He dreamed of concentrating all of the nation's physical, intellectual, and moral forces for achieving that greatness, that is, for strengthening France's international influence. He wanted to see France disciplined and united by the single ideal of bringing eminence to the country and the nation, inspired and led by the one worthy person—Charles de Gaulle, naturally. That was the goal de Gaulle set for himself. By taking some of the features of monarchy, some aspects of the republic, retaining the respect for the basic personal rights and freedoms, he constructed a model which was, in his view, a combination of all that was best in France's rich historical experience. True, that experience was interpreted entirely in terms of de Gaulle's personal conception, and the state ideal was cut specifically to fit him. This plan of the state structure has been called a republic of the presidential type, a monarchist republic, the regime of personal power, etc. It is in any case clear that it is a long cry from the power of the people, from genuine democracy. The Gaullist project for a strong state structure is highly specific, and its functioning entirely depends on a happy and almost extraordinary chance which will give power to a man who can really be an arbiter, which is practically improbable in a class society; everything is possible in this system, and the arbitrary authority of the head of state is not limited by anything except his own will. In short, de Gaulle's project was intended exclusively for de Gaulle.

To put it into reality, de Gaulle now had to prevent the restoration of the Third Republic by a referendum, and to convene a Constituent Assembly with limited powers. It was to exist for a short term only, during which it merely had to approve a draft constitution without interfering in the government's affairs. The referendum of October 21 appeared to be a clear win for de Gaulle, but on the same day the voters elected to the Constituent Assembly 160 Communists, 142 Socialists, 30 members of the U.D.S.R., 152 members of the M.R.P., 29 Radicals and 66 Right-wingers of all kinds. All of them rejected de Gaulle's constitutional plans to some extent or other, even those who called upon the electorate to give the answers proposed by de Gaulle during the

referendum. They did not hold with the view, either, that the Constituent Assembly must not interfere in the administration's affairs. De Gaulle realised that a fight with the parties was inevitable, and that he could not count on their effective support. De Gaulle therefore decided, as he later remembered, that he "owed something further [to France]—to take my leave as a man morally intact".

True, the Constituent Assembly rendered him exceptional honours. It unanimously elected him President of the government, no longer provisional, and proclaimed that "Charles de Gaulle had deserved well of his country". But Clemenceau had once also been honoured by this formula of recognition, whereupon he lost the presidential election.

When de Gaulle began forming the government, Socialists, Radicals, and even representatives of the M.R.P. expressed all kinds of reservations and laid down their terms. But de Gaulle's most acute conflict was with the Communists. As they proved to be the first party of the country, they naturally demanded at least one of the most important ministerial posts: of National Defence, Foreign Affairs, of the Interior. De Gaulle refused to do so, giving the Communists to understand that he did not consider the Communist Party sufficiently "national" and "French". The Communists were indignant. Indeed, 75 thousands of their comrades had died in fighting the fascists. Not a single other party had done half as much as the Communists had in the fight for the freedom of the country.

De Gaulle offered to resign and, in a radio speech, tried to justify his resolution not "to put the Communists in a position to dominate our policy by surrendering to them 'the diplomacy which expresses it, the Army which sustains it or the police which protects it'".

But this crisis ended in a compromise. De Gaulle realised that for him to resign over such a matter would be to insult one fourth of the French electorate, who had voted for the Communists. He could not permit himself to do so. As a result, de Gaulle withdrew his resignation, the Assembly confirmed his powers, and he formed a cabinet of five Communists, five Socialists, five M.R.P. members, and six Gaullists. Since a representative of the Communist Party became Minister for Armaments, thus heading one of the two military departments, the Communists got half of one forbidden portfolio, occupying also the posts of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Health, Minister for Industry, and Labour Minister. The whole episode showed de Gaulle that he would not be able to rule without parliament.

A fresh conflict was not long in coming. It broke out during the discussion of the 1946 budget. The final voting was to take place on January 1. The Socialists suddenly demanded that military expen-

...ture should be cut by 20 per cent. There were more than sufficient grounds for that. While the military expenditures were intended for sustaining the policy of "greatness", hunger and other misfortunes made the life of the working people harder and harder. In October, before the elections, rationing had been abolished, but now it had to be reintroduced, and the rations cut. The Communists would undoubtedly support the Socialists. De Gaulle was particularly stung by the fact that the reduction of the military budget was actively advocated by André Philip, one of his closest associates of the heroic London period of Free France. True, the Socialist leader had warned him even at that time that after the war their ways would part. But de Gaulle had forgotten all that, taking Philip's conduct as personal betrayal.

The real issue was not the budget but the fact that an attempt again was made to restrict de Gaulle's power, and that in the military sphere, the closest to his heart. In a speech to the Assembly, de Gaulle stressed that aspect: "The Assembly ... had shown, by its attitude, that it prefers a regime in which the Assembly governs. It is not a system that coincides with the Government's ideas on the subject." De Gaulle dropped this remark in his speech: "This will be without doubt the last time that I speak in this hall." Some did not notice it, others did not attach any importance to it. But, as de Gaulle later remembered, "as I left the Palais-Bourbon on the evening of January 1, I had determined upon my departure from office. All that remained was to select the date, without making any concessions whatever".

He decided to leave before the month was out, for at the end of the debate on the draft constitution was to begin, and de Gaulle did not expect any good to come of that. However, to collect his thoughts once again, the General went on leave for the first time in seven years, taking his wife and brother Pierre to the south, to Antibes, the Eden-Roc health resort. Before he left, he attended the wedding of his daughter Elisabeth, who married Alain de Boiswau, an officer from a respectable bourgeois family related to the Schneiders, the magnates of the French metallurgical industry.

He thought out the details of his retirement on the rocky coast of the Mediterranean, so cold in winter, some 400 kilometres from the island of Elba, another famous retirement spot. After eight days on the sea coast, on Monday, January 14, de Gaulle returned to Paris. On one more occasion he felt obliged to go to Palais-Bourbon. Two days after his return Edouard Herriot spoke in the Assembly protesting against the government's decision to posthumously award the soldiers who had died in fighting the Americans on November 8-10, 1942. Herriot believed that the awards were inappropriate since the soldiers had fought for Vichy against the Allies. De Gaulle could not be silent when the recent war was

discussed—a subject which he regarded as sacred. He gave Herriot a biting rebuff, insisting that death in battle, in carrying out orders of the commanders bearing the political responsibility, was performance of one's duty, regardless of any other factors. Such a death was in any case less open to criticism than the position of a political leader who, on the eve of the liberation of Paris, conducted negotiations and exchanged letters with Laval. De Gaulle added: "Since 1940, I did not restrict myself to exchanging letters and messages with Vichy ... I at once proceeded to artillery salvoes." This speech expressed de Gaulle's hurt and indignation at the politicians who had done goodness knows what in the critical days and were now trying to get rid of him.

On January 19, 1946, de Gaulle invited all the ministers of his government to come on the morning of the next day, a Sunday, to his office in the Rue Saint-Dominique. On January 20, wearing his uniform, he entered the Hall of Armour where the ministers were waiting for him. De Gaulle shook hands all round and, without inviting them to sit down, spoke these words: "The exclusive regime of parties has reappeared. I disapprove of it. But aside from establishing by force a dictatorship which I do not desire and which would certainly end in disaster, I have not the means of preventing this experiment. I must therefore withdraw. Today, in fact, I shall send the President of the National Assembly a letter informing him of the government's resignation. I sincerely thank each of you for the support you have given me."

No one expressed surprise or regret, no one asked the General to retract his decision. Everybody was silent. De Gaulle bade the ministers adieu and left. Maurice Thorez, General Secretary of the Communist Party and de Gaulle's Deputy as Premier, remarked: "A departure made with greatness!" The Socialist Jules Moch said: "This retirement is indeed a serious one, but good can come of evil. The General's personality stifled the National Assembly. Now the latter can reveal itself freely." Gay and Teitgen, Ministers from the Catholic M.R.P., spoke up: "We are confronting the heavy responsibility of succeeding de Gaulle. Our movement will try to be worthy of it." "Come now," Maurice Thorez exclaimed, "since you couldn't get anywhere with the General, how will you do better without him?" That was the way this scene was described in de Gaulle's memoirs.

On the same day the General moved from the house in Neuilly where he had lived with his family, and settled temporarily in Marly, the empty residence of prime ministers. He was obviously ill-at-ease, now playing patience, now dropping the cards. The idea of going to Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises suggested itself at once, but after the German occupation, everything was in ruins there; it was now being repaired. Someone had recently invited him to Canada,

and he declared that he was going there. "I shall catch fish, and you, you will fry it!" said he to his wife. On the next day, still staying in Marly, he became even more uneasy; he sent an officer to find out why no one came to visit him. Why were there no delegations? Could it be that the police had thrown a cordon round his residence and did not let the people in? It transpired that no obstacles had been erected between him and the people.

On the third day, he wrote to one of those close to him: "...As for my departure, it is no more than a peripeteia. Before drawing conclusions, wait for the end." Was it indeed a manoeuvre calculated to elicit pleas for his return, that he might lay down his terms? The newspapers voiced arguments and hints that the General's retirement would not be long.

But, if that was his plan, why did the General quite earnestly assure Vincent Auriol, President of the National Assembly, that he was not going to speak on the radio announcing his resignation, although he might have done so without any difficulty at all? All these oddities of the General's behaviour make one recall a passage from his book *The Edge of the Sword* where he writes how hard it is to stand constant strain: "Here one finds the real motive for retirements that are hard to explain: suddenly a successful and popular man is seen throwing down the burden."

Indeed, de Gaulle, with all his external imperturbability, sangfroid, and ability to keep his thoughts secret, sometimes revealed the frailties of an ordinary man. Churchill once wrote: "Under an impassive, imperturbable demeanour he seemed to me to have a remarkable capacity for feeling pain."

Even if the resignation was not a manoeuvre, the general attitude stung him painfully. Quite possibly he wanted spontaneous signs of attention as recognition of his deserts. But complete indifference? That was something that de Gaulle had not expected! Meeting one of his few visitors in those days, he let fall suddenly, "This is Longwood..." So he was thinking of Napoleon's last refuge? A strange association, indicating confused emotions, possibly perplexity. After a week at Marly, the General suddenly decided to visit, with his family, his wife's brother Jacques Vendroux in his estate Sept-Fontaines. They packed quickly, and, as he got into the car, the General extracted from his inexhaustible stock of historical knowledge a remark made by a certain French marshal as he gave up an unavailing storming of a fortress; so he recited it, jokingly: "And now you will see that which is most difficult in the art of war: retreat!"

De Gaulle waited in vain for any sign of disturbances, demonstrations or meetings, for any sign of confusion. At last, he left for his residence, the Boisserie in Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, now finally repaired. During the war years, the trees in the park had grown. The drive from the gates to the house, some two hundred yards long, had become more shady. To lend a more aristocratic appearance to this somewhat bourgeois two-storey house, the General had a sexagonal tower added to it, whose not very tall cone now rose above the tiled roof of the oblong building. This made the house look a bit like a castle. His study was in the tower—a room with three windows. When the General, sitting at the table, raised his eyes, he could enjoy the panoramic view of fields, low hills, and a dark forest in the distance. "The Gallic forest," the General used to say. Not a single building or human figure in the vast expanse stretching to the horizon. A large flowerbed in the shape of the Cross of Lorraine, some ten metres by seven, was laid in the lawn before the house in memory of the epic struggle begun in London on June 18, 1940. That was history already, and de Gaulle, not without sadness, started working on his memoirs. True, he willingly interrupted the work to answer letters. Courteously and in old-fashioned and pompous style, de Gaulle thanked each author who sent him a book. Sometimes letters from devoted men, full of the best intentions, annoyed him. His loyal Michelet, Minister of the Armed Forces in his government, who continued to hold that post after the General's departure, wrote to him about de Gaulle's military rank—still temporary. The point was that a "regularisation" was taking place at the time, the checking up on and confirmation of the war-time promotions, and de Gaulle had not been confirmed as Brigadier General. Unless he passed through the "regularisation" procedure, he would remain just a retired colonel.

"My dear Minister," answered de Gaulle, "since June 10, 1940—the day when I left the cadre to embark upon a path sufficiently exceptional—the events that followed were of such a nature and dimension that it would be impossible to 'regularise' a situation absolutely without precedent.

"In that situation, there has been no need whatever to change anything during the five years, seven months and three days of a truly great ordeal. Any 'administrative solution' that one might try to apply today would take on a strange and even ridiculous aspect.

"The only measure that would fit the scale is to leave things as they are. Death will take it on itself, one day, to smooth over any difficulties, if there are indeed any."

De Gaulle refuses everything—a military medal, the order of the Legion of Honour, the special title of "General of Liberation". He is Brigadier General by courtesy, wearing two stars on the sleeves and his cap, and nothing but the Cross of Lorraine on the breast.

What is the meaning of all this for history? Unlike men who have no feeling for history and their own part in it, he senses it at all times. History is here, too, where the fields of Champagne, Lorraine, and Burgundy meet, where the sky has seen so much glory and grief, where so much blood and so many corpses have made the earth fertile. He sees the vestiges of the Roman road passing from Langres to Strasbourg. Nearby are the *Champs catalauniques*, where the Gauls stopped Attila, and the fields where the Emperor fought. Here are the routes along which France was invaded. There have been seven such invasions in two life spans. Generations of Gauls, Frenchmen, royal musketeers, sansculottes, builders of cathedrals and destroyers of monasteries have passed here, leaving not a trace on the earth. In the 14th century, there stood the monastery of Saint Jean-Baptiste on the spot where Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises is. A century later, another church was built next to it, hence the name of the village: *deux églises*, "two churches". But the monastery was destroyed, and only one small old church remains, rebuilt in the 18th century, where he goes to Mass on Sundays. So many generations have lived, suffered and died in these parts, leaving a completely deserted scenery now stretching before his eyes.

The General lowered his eyes to a page from his favourite, Chateaubriand, who wrote in his old age: "Like a spectator sitting in the abandoned hall, the boxes empty, the candles extinguished, I am now alone in the whole world, before a lowered curtain in the silence of night..."

Visitors are infrequent at Colombey: Paris is some 250 km away. And then there is little gaiety about the General's reception. The fare is always spartan, particularly on Fridays. Beer is usually drunk, with wine for specially invited guests only. The General is fond of simple food, preferably with cabbage. His closer associates used to joke: "We return from Colombey. We have eaten mutton ragout with potatoes, without mutton and without potatoes." The family's budget was limited. They sold the luxurious American car, Roosevelt's gift, and bought a small French one. Mme de Gaulle

obtained a driver's licence and drove herself to nearby townships to get foodstuffs.

From time to time men devoted to the General came on visits, undeterred by the great distance. Among them were Michelet, Vallon, Soustelle, Malraux, Guichard, d'Astier, and other Gaullists of the London period. This is how d'Astier describes the scene in Colombey: "The house is spacious. One passes through the first room, furnished in rustic style, into another, a large salon furnished in a traditional fashion, without much sophistication... The furniture, ranging from Louis XV, genuine or imitation, to Napoleon III and the English style, has been accumulated by inheritance, as marriage presents, by chance and the necessities of service and garrison life. Family life centres round the dining-room and the small salon where everybody withdraws after meals. The tone never rises, either in quarrel or in laughter... Before going to his tower—where neither the children nor the wife nor the guests are admitted—de Gaulle sacrifices a quarter of an hour to conversation, to social life, his long body reclining in the voltaire chair..."

He then goes up to his tower and, locking himself there, reads, thinks, and silently contemplates the empty horizon; he smokes a lot, three or four packets of cigarettes a day. No, he has not found a quiet life, although he professes that rural life does him a lot of good. He is bored, he is indignant at being forgotten, everything displeases him. Whenever conversation touches on politics, he gives vent to disdain and malice: "I don't like Socialists, because they are not socialists. I don't like the M.R.P.s, because they are M.R.P.s. I don't like my partisans, because they like money." He finds that only the Communists can still act, but that angers him most of all, for he especially dislikes Communists, although he respects their strength.

Despite his repugnance for political reality, de Gaulle tensely watches the events. Every morning he hurries to meet the chauffeur who buys newspapers at Bar-sur-Aube and takes them to the Boisserie. He snatches them from the chauffeur and reads them at once, acidly commenting on all news. Every day he leaves his study at 12:59 with the precision of an automaton and switches on the radio. That is the time of the newscast, and the General immediately evaluates the political news, or rather ruthlessly denounces it: "In this country, it is impossible to do anything. The French return to their vomit. France is going to rack and ruin. It will glide to the brink of the abyss."

Now the General's tragedy has become quite clear: while cherishing and cultivating the most elevated idea of abstract and eternal France, he treats the French as they are with increasing contempt!

All the more so that they manage without de Gaulle, quite easily. After his resignation, a new government was formed, without much difficulty, out of representatives of the Communist Party, the Socialists, and the M.R.P. It was headed by Felix Gouin, a rather colourless Socialist. But he at least endeavoured to reconcile the contradictory aspirations of his disparate ministers. The parties now began to play a decisive role, for there was no more de Gaulle to keep them down with his weight, authority, and contempt. Things were not running any too smoothly, but no worse than under de Gaulle. The people went hungry, of course, as before, while the racketeers and the black market flourished. Inflation rose in leaps and bounds. Still, economy picked up strength, slowly and with a great deal of creaking. To take an example, coal production rose by a factor of four in 1946 as compared to 1945. The Communists heading the economic ministries vigorously fought to increase production, dragging the country out of the economic morass and overcoming the bourgeoisie's sabotage. The workers patiently refrained from strikes, for it was exactly at that time that the important social reforms were taking place. De Gaulle's departure had made things a great deal simpler in this respect. In 1946, wages were increased by about a quarter, though depreciation of money rapidly ate up the increase. However that may be, France did not drop dead without de Gaulle and neither did it fall into an abyss.

The focal point of political life still was the problem of the future state structure, the working out of a draft constitution. Earlier, the work of the constitutional committee was influenced by de Gaulle. Now certain anti-democratic propositions were struck out. The draft constitution proclaimed the working people's economic and social rights and stressed the state's secular character. The principle of the National Assembly's sovereignty was fully implemented. The constitution was a major step forward as compared to the fundamental law of the Third Republic. The draft constitution was a realisation of the hopes of the Resistance fighters. The referendum took place on May 5, 1946. The M.R.P. and other Right-wingers, the Gaullists and the Church voted against. As a result, the first constitution fell through, with 10,450,000 votes against and 9,280,000 for the constitution. Now a new Constituent Assembly would have to be elected and a new draft compiled. Elections took place on June 2. The atmosphere was oppressive. Léon Blum, the Socialist leader, went to the U.S.A., where he was promised generous aid if the Communists left the government. Result: the Socialists lost a quarter of a million votes and got 112 seats, while the Communists gained 200,000 votes and won 146 seats. The positions of the M.R.P. became consolidated, the Catholics won an additional million votes and 160 seats, and were the largest party in the Chamber. The parties of the Right maintained

their positions. On the whole, there was an obvious shift to the Right. Work began on the new draft constitution.

De Gaulle kept silent during the referendum and the elections. In May, he had even rejected contemptuously Premier Gouin's suggestion that he should take part in the ceremony on Victory Day. But now he decided to interfere. The success of the M.R.P., the party on which he could rely more than on any other, the failure of the constitution during the referendum—all of this looked encouraging. Teitgen, one of the M.R.P. leaders, warned him: "In saying 'no' to the draft constitution, you will impair your chances of an eventual election to the presidency of the Republic." But that did not worry him at all, for "they", that is, the parties, assigned the president a ridiculous decorative part. He replied: "I shall probably be beaten. But I passed my life in being beaten at the beginning and triumphing at the end. Recall my military theories, or better still my act of June 18, 1940. In that epoch, I had nearly no one around me. Four years later, I had the crowds. The same may happen with the constitution."

On June 16, 1946 de Gaulle staged a return to the political scene. The props were carefully selected. He spoke at a meeting in Bayeux, that small town in Normandy where he once began to assert his power after the Allied landings. Everything here reminded one of Free France. Among those present were Admiral d'Argenlieu, High Commissioner of France in Indochina, General Jouin, Chief of General Staff, Gaston Palewski, former director of his cabinet, Maurice Schumann, who had usually conducted his broadcasts from London, his former ministers René Capitant and Jacques Soustelle. An enormous crowd from all over France gathered there. It met him with resounding cries, "To power! To power!"

De Gaulle warned the Constituent Assembly against drafting the new constitution after the model of the first. He explained the ideal project for France: extensive powers for the president and maximal restrictions on the powers of the two-chamber parliament. That was his long-cherished plan for an authoritarian republic of the presidential type. De Gaulle indignantly rejected suspicions of his dictatorial designs. He eloquently denounced the very idea of personal dictatorship, in obvious contradiction to the substance of his own plans: "And then, what is a dictatorship if not one big adventure? Undoubtedly, its beginnings seem advantageous. Amid the enthusiasm of some and the resignation of others, in the rigour of the order which it imposes, by virtue of splendid decorations and of propaganda speaking with one voice, it exercises at first a dynamism which contrasts with the anarchy which preceded it. But it is the fate of dictatorships to exaggerate their undertakings. As impatience with the restrictions and longing for freedom become apparent among the citizenry, it is necessary for the dictatorship to

offer them compensation in the shape of ever greater successes, endlessly. The nation becomes a machine of which the master imparts it a frenetic acceleration. Whether in internal or external affairs, the goals, the risks, the efforts exceed little by little all limits. At each step, within the country and outside it, the obstacles multiply. In the end, the spring breaks... The nation finds itself broken up, fallen lower than it had been before the adventure began."

Naturally, the Communists and the Socialists received de Gaulle's speech with great disapproval. But it was resolutely approved of by the Right. As for the M.R.P., which would play the decisive role in the struggle around the constitution, its leaders expressed their sympathy for de Gaulle, although their attitude to his project was lukewarm. In the meantime, a new constitution was drafted. It became less democratic, the president's powers were extended, and parliament now had a second chamber, the Council of the Republic (*le Conseil de la République*). Still, the Communists managed to salvage the principal progressive content of the constitution. De Gaulle condemned the new constitution, too, saying that it was a sister of the first. The result was that the cracks in his relations with the M.R.P. turned into gaps, for the Catholics supported the constitution.

On October 13 the second referendum took place, and the constitution was approved this time, if only by a slight majority and with a great many abstentions. De Gaulle contemptuously remarked that the constitution had been approved by one third of the French, another third rejected it, and the last third simply ignored it. Nevertheless, the new state structure was born, and the history of the Fourth Republic began.

That was a new defeat for de Gaulle, for the voters had not heeded him, while political parties had proved to be much stronger. What was to be done? What remained to him was the rather dubious instrument of continuing the struggle, the Gaullist Union, which had emerged to support the ideas proposed at Bayeux. It comprised men from different parties personally devoted to de Gaulle. At first, the General openly supported that Union, hoping to get his own back during the elections. But he felt at once that he thereby forfeited his role of an arbiter embodying the will of the nation, becoming merely the leader of a party, and a very weak one at that. He therefore did not interfere any more in the election campaign, which was very prudent of him. The Gaullist Union gathered an abject 330,000 votes at the November 10, 1946 elections. The voting, fifth in that year, again brought the Communists a victory. They got a total of 5.5 million votes and 182 seats in parliament. The Socialists again lost, keeping only 101 seats. The M.R.P. lost half a million votes. That was when de Gaulle's final quarrel with

the M.R.P. occurred. On the eve of the elections, the General's references to the M.R.P. leaders became public: he had called them "incompetent and therefore dangerous". Then the Catholic Party got another broadside from de Gaulle, still more accurate and destructive: he said that "the sharks had eaten the apostles" in that party. But the main thing that caused the quarrel between the General and this major non-Communist party was the panic and fear of the bourgeoisie in the face of the Communist Party's continued success. The fight against the Communists demanded a union of all the forces, whereas the General proved to be a factor of dissent: the danger of his coming to power pushed the Socialists towards cooperation with the Communists. Not to leave together these two partners, so dangerous to the bourgeoisie when they acted in concert, the M.R.P. had to take part in the governmental combinations. The three-party bloc therefore remained when the constitution of the Fourth Republic came into force. After a short term in power of a one-party Socialist government headed by Léon Blum, a new tripartite government was formed in January 1947, headed by Paul Ramadier. However, apart from the Communists, the Socialists, and the M.R.P., the government now included Radicals and even Right-wingers. Generally speaking, there was a return to the traditional forms of French parliamentarism which de Gaulle believed to have always been the root of all France's misfortunes. The President of the National Assembly was now Edouard Herriot, who had occupied that same post in the last years of the Third Republic. Everything was thus "normalised", which left no room for the activities of de Gaulle, a man of extraordinary circumstances, acute crises, of the times of a great threat. But none of that was in evidence now, and the General retired to Colombey. Between November 1, 1946 and March 30, 1947, he is silent and bored, gazing at the empty horizons of Champagne, though he says something quite different to Alexandre Parodi who comes to visit him: "I am never bored when I am alone with myself." In actual fact, though, inaction and the monotony of rustic life depress him. He spends long hours sitting in twilight on a sofa covered with green velvet in front of the fireplace. His visitors advise him to go back to political life, but he cuts them short, annoyed: "No, please leave me the pleasure of putting logs in the fireplace. That is all that is left me."

He is 56. At this age, he is full of vigour and desire to act. But he feels that he cannot keep waiting endlessly at such an age. They will of course appeal to him at a time of great crisis, but when would that come? The possibility seems vague, doubtful, and even improbable. Besides, time obliterates the image of the legendary liberator of the country from the people's memory. Will he never again feel the joy of "the divine game of heroes", which has been

the meaning of his life since youth? Will it never come again, the harsh happiness of the struggle begun on June 18, 1940? He carefully watches the life of France and of the whole world. An instinctive desire to see events that would be worthy of his participation compel him to dramatise the situation of early 1947, acute and complex as it is. He feels the coming of formidable events behind the routine of parliamentary life. The French colonial empire, which he put together with such difficulty, bit by bit, during the war, is battered by the national liberation movement. An uprising breaks out in Madagascar. War begins in Indochina. The financial crisis becomes deeper all the time. He is thus justified in saying that "1947 runs the risk of becoming the year of financial and colonial disaster, as 1940 was the year of military and political disaster".

He kept searching for parallels with the events of 1940. But the main thing there had been the German invasion, Hitler then drove everyone to panic. For de Gaulle, whom "men persisted in seeing [as] a kind of capital of sovereignty", external danger was the greatest of all dangers. That danger emerged, and not only in the imagination of de Gaulle. That was the time of the breaking-up of the anti-Hitlerite coalition, its division into opposing political and later military blocs. It was exactly in the first months of 1947 that a giant outbreak of anti-Soviet hysteria occurred. It was as if 1919 were back again, when posters had adorned the walls of Paris picturing Bolsheviks with knives in their teeth. Malicious anti-Soviet lampoons were published in millions of copies. Aggravation of the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Western powers in the diplomatic sphere was accompanied by publication of countless reports of the inevitable and imminent "Soviet aggression" against the countries of Western Europe. This inception of the "cold war" assumed especially morbid forms in France, where the bourgeoisie was frightened out of its wits by the rapid growth of the influence of the French Communist Party.

The stream of visitors to Colombey swelled. Those were de Gaulle's comrades-in-arms from the times of the London campaign, the men of the B.S.R.A. underground network organised by Passy in the war years, now feeling bored without something to do, representatives of conservative circles really frightened by Communism, doubtful characters only capable of making a career in the General's long shadow, and opponents of the first projects for a "European community" appealing to the recognised defender of the nation's independence. They insisted, as with one voice, that the country was in danger of imminent destruction and that no one but de Gaulle could save it. They drew a biased picture of the mood of the people, said to be indignant at the revival of decaying parliamentarism. Instances of disgusting corruption became public

knowledge. Felix Gouin, de Gaulle's successor as Premier, got mixed up in wine speculations. France clearly had need to be saved! A storm was coming, and a tried helmsman had to stand on the bridge. These seeds fell on well-tilled soil; the General himself was avid for action.

Jean-Raymond Tournoux writes in the book *The Tragedy of the General* (*La tragédie du Général*): "Little by little, de Gaulle became convinced that the road to power was open. That dolorous existence on the Promethean rock was coming to an end."

That was the start of the ill-fated adventure of the R.P.F., or *Rassemblement du Peuple Français*, the Rally for the French People. Characteristically, de Gaulle deals with it in his memoirs in a single extremely nebulous sentence which does not even mention the notorious organisation by name. François Mauriac, the General's respectful admirer who believed him to be a lonely noble figure embodying the best traditions of the French nation, a man of noble mind, personal selflessness and magnanimity, wrote that the R.P.F. was "the biggest mistake he had ever made".

Jean Lacouture writes that "one will understand nothing about the incredible adventure of the R.P.F. unless one tries to place oneself in the climate of the epoch, the climate of rupture between the West and the East and the start of the cold war... What made it original in the French political landscape was the theatrical atmosphere given to it by Malraux. The R.P.F. was Charles de Gaulle in André Malraux's production".

A talented but chaotic novelist, an admirer of "revolutions" which he discovered in the strangest events, Malraux made de Gaulle's acquaintance in 1944 and produced a great impression on the latter by his culture, a romantic approach to politics, and fervent devotion to the General. De Gaulle believed that Malraux was "a writer among the greatest" in France. De Gaulle drew him nearer to his person and made him a minister; Malraux was said to have just as strong influence on him as Emile Mayer once had. It was Malraux who gave the whole R.P.F. venture the image of a "second Free France", a repetition of the June 18 appeal, a "new Resistance", etc. The familiar phrase that all great events in history occur twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce, is here unusually appropriate. It was all a farce, absurd and unworthy of the General.

In March 1947, de Gaulle decided to start "the second Resistance". The decision followed immediately the announcement of the well-known "Truman doctrine", which was, as it were, an official declaration of the cold war. On March 30 in Brunevalle, Normandy, a ceremony was held at the foot of sheer rocks in memory of the landing here of Canadian and British troops on February 27, 1942. In the presence of the British and Canadian ambassadors and of

50,000 Frenchmen, de Gaulle made a speech paying tribute to the heroism of the foreign soldiers who destroyed here the German radars, and of the Resistance fighters who showed them the way. General de Gaulle ended his speech with an obscure remark: "The day will come when, discarding sterile games and reforming the badly constructed frame in which the nation loses its way and the state is disqualified, the immense mass of the French will reunite with France." He then made an appointment with his audience for the following Sunday in Strasbourg.

Meanwhile, for several weeks there had been rumours in the political circles about the possibility of a coup. As soon as de Gaulle returned to Colombey, he learnt that Prime Minister Paul Ramadier might arrive at any minute, though it was late at night. Indeed, the Premier had left the Hôtel Matignon, the residence of the government, by a secret passage, taken the car chauffeured by General Bonnafé, director of his military cabinet, and driven the 250-km-long route to Colombey at a headlong pace.

On entering the house, he spoke excitedly to de Gaulle asking him not to imperil the Republican regime which alone could lead France to a revival. He asked him to help the Republic, for France could not exist without it. De Gaulle answered the Premier in cold and strict tones:

"The present constitution will not bring about the grandeur of France, the only object of my concern and the supreme goal of my life. The regime of the parties is injurious. It inhibits the conduct of a grand foreign policy, just as it impairs internal stability and peace." The General then spoke in an even more threatening tone: "You reproach me for becoming a political leader. Yes, it is true, I am a political leader. The Resistance was not only national, M. President, it was also political. Imagine, I maintain my role. I shall remain the guide of the Nation. Do not be astonished if I make other speeches, and if I take certain positions on problems concerning the future of France. Do not expect me to renounce my position. It is I who have restored the Republic. Do you think that I want to overthrow it now? ... I only serve France. I shall always serve France alone."

Finishing his report to Vincent Auriol, President of the Republic, about his nocturnal trip to Colombey, Ramadier said: "The General offered me a cup of coffee, but the coffee was bad. He accompanied me with courtesy into the night, to my car, and left me with these words: 'Reassure the worried minds. I shall not be Boulanger.'"

General Boulanger tried to become a dictator in the previous century. The attempt ended in a failure, for, taking the rumour of imminent arrest on trust, Boulanger escaped to Belgium and soon shot himself on the grave of his mistress...

On hearing Ramadier's report, Vincent Auriol remarked: "Very well! Let him know, then, that I shall not be Hindenburg." That was quite another historical parallel. Hindenburg, President of Germany, was the man who called Hitler to power.

Thus de Gaulle declared war on the Fourth Republic. So far, the government did not go beyond taking away de Gaulle's guard of honour and issuing an order not to broadcast his speeches on the radio unless they were official. In the meantime, the walls of houses all over France were adorned with enormous posters picturing de Gaulle against the background of a map of France and calling everybody to come to Strasbourg for the celebrations of the second anniversary of the liberation of Alsace from the Germans. The choice of the locale and the occasion of de Gaulle's new appearance emphasised his far-reaching designs. From the times of the Franco-Prussian war, Strasbourg had been the symbol of French nationalism and of the struggle for the return of Alsace and Lorraine. In January 1945 the city was taken by the French troops, but Eisenhower decided to abandon it because of Rundstedt's offensive in the Ardennes. De Gaulle objected to that, and besides, the German counter-offensive was frustrated by the Soviet Army's gigantic offensive on the Eastern front. De Gaulle made no reference to any of this in his long speech on April 7, which he made from the City Hall balcony. He said that if a new danger arose, France would be on the side of the United States. He then expounded his critical views of the constitution and the Fourth Republic's policy and put forth a detailed programme of action aimed at general salvation and profound reform of the state. The moment had come, he said, for the French, for the immense majority of the people, to organise a union of the French people that would act within the law. It was not yet clear what it was all about, but the founding committee was organised on the same day.

On April 14, de Gaulle announced the founding of a new "above-party" party: "Today, the Rally for the French People has been created. I have taken upon myself the direction of this union." The goals of the new organisation also became clearer: liquidation of the traditional system of the omnipotence of the parties and establishment of a strong regime of a presidential type on the basis of the ideas propounded by de Gaulle in Bayeux in the previous year. The organisation and its cadre grew quickly, in military style, without elections or voting. All its leaders were appointed from above, by de Gaulle. Jacques Soustelle became its General Secretary.

The R.P.F. emerged on the scene at a time of mass discontent with the situation in the country. On May 1, the bread ration was reduced from 300 grammes to 250 per day, and soon to a mere 200 grammes. The petty bourgeoisie was in the grip of an anti-Com-

munist psychosis. In May, the organisation was already 800,000 strong, with 100,000 members in Paris alone. The directorate of the R.P.F. set up its headquarters in No. 5, Rue de Solférino. It was a small gloomy hotel with dark and badly furnished rooms. On the ground floor, there was the office of the General and of his aide, Captain Bonneval. The first floor was occupied by all kinds of services. The headquarters were run by Olivier Guichard, a tall, silent, mysteriously smiling officer.

In the meantime the General made one speech after another, disclosing his goals and intentions. Especially characteristic was the speech he made on July 29 at Rennes, the capital of Brittany. In it, de Gaulle declared the French Communists to be separatists. He referred to the activities of a party for which every fourth Frenchman had voted, a party which invariably and firmly defended the national interests of France, as serving "the masters of a great Slavic power". He accused the Communists of a desire for a dictatorship, of using the slogans of social justice and liberation of the working people for the sole purpose of hitching "our beautiful country" to a totalitarian regime "where no Frenchman would be master of his soul or body".

The General then passed on to the subject of the Soviet Union. He reminded his audience of the decisive role the Soviet Army had played in defeating Nazism, of the French people's enthusiasm about the Soviet victories, of the establishment of friendly relations with Moscow. He recalled his trip to Moscow in December 1944 and the treaty of alliance concluded there. But now, de Gaulle said, contradicting himself and the facts, Soviet Russia inspired fear: "This bloc of some 400 millions now borders on Sweden, Turkey, Greece, Italy! Its frontier lies not more than 500 kilometres from ours, just about two stages for Tour de France cyclists! ...We say that this state of things runs the risk of terribly endangering, sooner or later, the liberty of men and the independence of France."

The ideas expressed at Rennes, would be repeated, with variations, in his other speeches, they would form the basis of R.P.F. propaganda. The R.P.F. periodicals *L'Etincelle* (The Spark) and *Rassemblement* (Rally) would cook up de Gaulle's views as slogans and appeals, concocting a sort of political platform out of them. But they would remain unsubstantiated primitive variations on the standard anti-Communist themes. There were no proofs of the existence of Soviet aggression, and neither could there be. The attempts to substantiate the principal ideological thesis of the R.P.F. did not go beyond a fantastic analogy between the policy of the U.S.S.R. and that of Hitlerite Germany. Thus in October 1947, de Gaulle declared France to be in danger. "There is not a single reasonable person," he said, "who would not see, in fact, the most disquieting perspectives appearing on the horizon. We have just

repulsed—and at what cost!—Hitler's attempt at domination, and here is another ambitious power which seems to wish, in its turn, to thrust itself on the world using the sombre appeal and the facilities for action offered by a totalitarian system."

No proofs were given of the reality of the Soviet threat. No proofs could be given, except for the reference of the Gaullist organ *L'Etincelle* to the mythical "will and testament of Peter the Great" who allegedly enjoined his successors to extend the territory of Russia without end. There were also reprints of Karl Marx's views on the aggressiveness of Russian Czarism. Beyond that—nothing!

The extreme ideological vacuity of the R.P.F. appeals to the masses reminds one of a very curious dialogue reported by a man who was very close to de Gaulle. Once, his comrade from the times of Saint-Cyr spoke about attracting flies with vinegar. To this de Gaulle replied that he attracted them with vinegar made of urine...

A strange discrepancy arose between de Gaulle's worldview and his activity at the head of the R.P.F. Already in his youth he rejected any actions based on some attitude adopted *a priori*. Now his fundamental thesis was that Communism is aggressive. All his life, de Gaulle had rejected the value of any absolute doctrines, and now he accepted *in toto* the doctrine of the inherent aggressiveness of Communism. De Gaulle seemed to have completely forgotten the ideas, which he had always valued so highly, of Henri Bergson, who insisted on acting in accordance with concrete circumstances and not abstract propositions. In his book *The Edge of the Sword*, de Gaulle once wrote: "Action must be built on circumstances. The general who has an excellent army and has carefully aligned it for battle, is beaten because he has no intelligence reports on the enemy."

In this case, however, there was no desire even to have any intelligence reports on the "enemy", that is, the Soviet Union, for everything was assumed to be known beforehand. Throughout this whole affair, de Gaulle also showed a tendency to give up his characteristic method of solving all problems from the standpoint of the primacy of the national factor, which he had always believed to be above all ideological constructions. But now it was precisely the ideological scheme of anti-Communism that became the basis of his actions. In practical terms, these actions led to France's renunciation of an independent national policy, for de Gaulle made her a US satellite in the anti-Communist crusade. That was yet another blatant contradiction— one between de Gaulle's constant nationalism and blind anti-Communism.

As a result, the actual R.P.F. ideology was nothing more than demagoguery, that is, exploitation of the fear of an imaginary threat and promises to save everybody from it. Alexander Werth, that shrewd biographer of de Gaulle, wrote: "The most puzzling aspect

of the R.P.F. is this: what were the motives that prompted de Gaulle to embark on this venture? He was not a demagogue by natural inclination; yet the impression one had of him in 1947 was that he had made up his mind to go through all the motions and contortions of a demagogue; it was an unpleasant spectacle to those who had been impressed in the past by de Gaulle's austere dignity."

Demagogic ideas were presented in suitable form. The main type of R.P.F. activities in the masses were enormous rallies at which de Gaulle made speeches. Untiringly, he travelled the length and breadth of France, making speeches amid great pomp and circumstance. Stands were erected, enormous poles raised with standards bearing the Cross of Lorraine. Spotlights, torches and fireworks blinded the spectators. The sound accompaniment included thunderous brass bands, rolling of drums, and shouting of slogans in chorus. R.P.F. militants assembled immense crowds. Thus, half a million gathered at a rally at the Vincennes hippodrome. At first, some heroic play would be performed, then folklore songs would be sung by a chorus, and finally, after proper introduction, de Gaulle would appear at a well-calculated moment and proceed to paint the picture of an imminent war in prophetic tones. All of this stemmed from the inventive imagination of the producer, André Malraux.

The enterprise was a success, if only for a brief period. The reason lay in the psychology of the crowd, which had grown used to associate de Gaulle's personality with the struggle to save the country during the war. It took a long time to grasp the sleight-of-hand substitution of words and phenomena practiced here: de Gaulle was the same, but the fight quite a different one, and there was no need to save the country at all, especially not in the way he suggested. Having set in motion the propaganda machine that stepped up the alarmist mood of awaiting an inevitable horrible invasion, de Gaulle's assistants became so carried away that they found themselves prisoners of their own mystification.

De Gaulle's associates, nicknamed "imperial guards", Colonel Rémy and Jacques Soustelle in particular, worked out, for instance; a detailed plan for evacuating from France the General with his family and closest assistants in the event of war. A coded message would be sent from Paris to Colombey over the telephone "40 to Chaumont". A special group would immediately drive the General and his entourage to the Saint-Dizier airdrome, where Major Raymond, a war-time pilot, always kept a plane ready. From there, they would fly. But where to? England seemed too near, in these changed conditions. To Switzerland, where de Gaulle's brother Xavier was a consul? But Switzerland would certainly be occupied. There were plans for flying to Africa or Canada. Soon, a new "June

18" appeal would be made from there. De Gaulle sceptically listened to all these proposals, expressing neither approval nor censure. Once, reading a current confidential report on the fresh aggravation of the international tension and on imminent invasion, de Gaulle remarked: "Stalin can strike the blow... France will be quickly overrun, the Cossacks will reach Brest... Yes, I am asking myself, why should not Stalin soon send his tanks and parachutists to Europe?"

The agents of the secret services of the R.P.F. really let themselves go: they brought a machine-gun to the Boisserie packed in a wooden case. On learning this, the General raised his hands to the sky, in desperation: "That is ridiculous! ... Better give me a tank! Please stop all this!"

But what was the R.P.F. in its essence, if one discards the propaganda trappings and the claims to be a union of the whole people? It became apparent that, despite the pretension to be above parties, it was in fact a party, though a very unusual one, a party that united mostly the conservative middle strata, peasants, tradesmen, and urban petty bourgeois. When the R.P.F. began to participate in elections, it got the support of those who usually voted for Right candidates. Most curiously, the true social nature of the R.P.F. was revealed by the attitude to it of former Vichy men. It was as if they had awaited its appearance to get back on the political scene. What was the attraction of the "new Resistance" for them? At the very beginning, immediately after the liberation of Paris, de Gaulle surprised many people by his lenient attitude to his former bitterest enemies. He pardoned Pétain who had been sentenced to death, he insisted on clemency and leniency towards collaborationists. The number of those punished and the measure of punishment proved infinitesimal compared to the enormous number of the victims of the Gestapo and Vichy. In little Belgium with its eight-million population, 50,000 traitors were sent to prison, while in France with its 40 millions, only 39,000. Nearly no one was dismissed during the purge of the administrative organs. Besides, such characteristic features of Vichy as anti-parliamentarism, hostility towards the parties, clericalism, and nationalism in the spirit of Maurras, were very similar to the R.P.F. tendencies. As a result, collaborationists came to participate in the "new Resistance", the more so that it was headed by de Gaulle himself.

The principal political objective of the R.P.F.—the replacement of parliamentary democracy by an authoritarian regime, combined with its other traits, made it the heir of old and well-known traditions. André Siegfried, a major sociologist of that time, wrote of the R.P.F.: "Under the Fourth Republic, it was no longer in a royalist or, strictly speaking, bonapartist form that the Right continued to exist but in the antiparliamentarian and authoritarian form."

In discussing the social nature of the R.P.F., one cannot pass over in silence one characteristic detail giving the lie to Malraux's statement that "the R.P.F., that is the *metro*", meaning the common people. One would look in vain in de Gaulle's spectacular speeches for any reference to the things that worried the people one could see in the Parisian underground at rush hours. He did not touch on prices, wages, he did not speak out against profiteers and the pressure of the monopolies, though he did advocate "social justice". If he had acted differently, the major banks and monopolies would hardly have financed R.P.F. propaganda.

In the autumn of 1947, the R.P.F. passed on from a noisy propaganda campaign to a direct attack on the Fourth Republic. On August 25 it was announced that Gaullists would run for municipal offices in all the electoral districts. They started a frenetic election campaign and soon celebrated their victory: in the towns with a population of more than 10,000, R.P.F. candidates got up to 40 per cent of the vote! In Paris, for instance, the Communists won 25 seats on the municipal council; the Socialists, 8; the M.R.P., 5; and the Gaullists, 52 seats. The General's brother, Pierre de Gaulle, became chairman of the capital's municipal council. R.P.F. mayors replaced Socialist ones in many major cities: Bordeaux, Lille, Nice, Chartres, Nancy, Mulhouse.

Another significant result of the elections was the complete failure of the R.P.F. attack on the Communist Party. The Communists retained their positions and won 31 per cent of the vote. The R.P.F. gains were at the expense of the M.R.P., which lost two-thirds of the votes, and also at the expense of the Radicals. This outcome was no less significant than the R.P.F. victory. It became clear that the new organisation was not a very effective instrument of combating Communism. The old parties had achieved at least something in this respect, like driving away the Communists from the government in May 1947. And the principal significance of the events at that time lay in a kind of competition between the R.P.F. and the other non-Communist parties in their struggle against the Communists.

In any case, de Gaulle could celebrate a victory. The trouble was, though, that those were municipal, not parliamentary elections, so that the path to power still remained very long. As for parliament, an attempt had been made already in August to set up a Gaullist group there including representatives of various parties who entered, on a part-time basis, so to speak, The Action Group for a True Democracy (*l'Intergroupe d'action pour une vraie démocratie*). But this bigamy, as it was called, produced a group of only forty deputies. After the municipal elections de Gaulle launched a new offensive against parliament. He declared that the government now represented merely a weak minority and that it was necessary to go

to the country, to hold early elections, whereupon a radical reform of the constitution was to be undertaken. De Gaulle demanded that the National Assembly should pass a two-thirds majority decision on its own dissolution and new elections.

This ultimatum was resolutely opposed by all the principal parties of parliament. In the light of the recent municipal elections, the leaders of the Socialists, the M.R.P., the Radicals and of the Right realised that it would not be the Communists who would become de Gaulle's first victims but they themselves, that they would be driven from the political scene. On October 28, a scene of "Republican anger" was played out in the National Assembly, and de Gaulle's demands were rejected. Of decisive significance was the fact that all of this took place against the background of a giant upsurge in the strike movement late in 1947, when the might of the working class and of the Communist Party was demonstrated in a very convincing manner. If a constitutional reform had been initiated at that time, the situation might have become even graver. De Gaulle's first attack on the Fourth Republic ended therefore in failure. That also determined the destiny of the R.P.F. as a whole. It all looked too artificial, too much of a sudden outburst or flare: there was not enough fuel for the fire to burn long. There was no basis for a "new Resistance", as there was no real enemy, no invader, while the Soviet "threat" proved to be a myth. The non-Communist parties launched a policy of the "third force", directed against the R.P.F. and against the Communist Party. André Malraux said: "The R.P.F. is the Resistance. The Third Force, that is Vichy. Communism is the enemy." But the French bourgeoisie became more and more inclined to think that it was precisely the "third force" that was the most effective and reliable instrument of combating Communism, and not the too extravagant R.P.F. The Radicals and the Rights began to move into positions of power. The process of the restoration of the prewar parliamentary system was merely intensified by the appearance of the R.P.F. on the scene.

The spring of 1948 was the highest point of the rise of the Rally for the French People. In April, the first national Congress of the R.P.F. was held in Marseilles. In his report, Jacques Soustelle asserted that the Rally was a million and a half-strong. The congress ended with a picturesque ceremony. An enormous platform was erected on a pontoon in the Old Port. An immense crowd gathered on the embankment. De Gaulle made a speech which contained absolutely nothing new. He had long begun to repeat himself. The ideological arsenal of the R.P.F. had proved to be too meagre. From then on, it was all downhill; in 1949, the decline was especially rapid. The strength of the Rally dropped to 350,000.

In 1948, elections to the Council of the Republic were held. R.P.F. success was more than modest: 58 seats. Even with the allies,

there was no question of forming the majority of 161. In March 1949, cantonal elections were held, which indicated a new fall in the influence of the R.P.F.; it netted about 25 cent of the vote.

Nothing weakens a party so much as absence of success, particularly a party like the R.P.F. emerging for the sake of a concrete immediate task. Internal strife, squabbles, and conflicts began, especially between the Paris headquarters and the local organisations. It was increasingly difficult to organise giant rallies, find premises, obtain money. The R.P.F.'s great weakness was that only one person could talk to the masses, de Gaulle himself. A great many adventurists hung on to the R.P.F. Former Vichy men, *cagouleurs*, and members of prewar fascist leagues compromised the Rally in the eyes of the public. "Muscle men" had to be used in organising rallies, as workers often mounted counter-demonstrations in response to the Communist Party's appeal. R.P.F. leaders raised paramilitary units that were moved in cars from city to city. At Grenoble, things went as far as R.P.F. men using firearms. What was more, the public learnt that Marseilles gangsters were used on that occasion.

De Gaulle could not fail to see the decay of the movement he had created; there was little chance of its success now. He realised, with great concern, that the whole affair was undermining the prestige he had won during the war. Paul-Marie de la Gorce writes in de Gaulle's biography: "The time was past when, despite considerable criticism, he still excited an almost unanimous respect. As head of a party, he had to bear all the blows and to brave out all the peripeteias of an interminable struggle, without glory and without hope for an immediate success. If they were to lead to his return to power, the bad memories would be effaced to a great extent, and he certainly hoped to regain some of the serenity and loftiness he had lost. If not, History would not fail to record the questionable evolution and even deformation of a man who had launched the June 18, 1940 appeal and had been the liberation of the country incarnate. There is no doubt that de Gaulle, sensing at times the inevitable checkmate, felt in advance an immense bitterness..."

But it was too early to retreat, and de Gaulle continued to guide the R.P.F. with firmness and vigour. The Rally had not yet passed the main test—the parliamentary elections to be held in 1951. Then there were certain events that seemed to confirm the correctness of the R.P.F. political line. In 1950, the war in Korea began, which drastically aggravated the international situation. General de Gaulle's gloomy prophecies about the inevitability of the great war seemed to be coming true. The country was growing more and more dissatisfied with the policy of the frequently changing cabinets of the "third force". The war in Indochina was a heavy burden. The leaders of the Fourth Republic had long discarded any ideas about

an independent foreign policy. Never before had France been so far from the ideal of "greatness", de Gaulle's eternal dream. It was now merely a N.A.T.O. "communications zone", and its rulers dragged behind the U.S. State Department without even a show of independence, for fear of losing American "aid". French policy on the German question ended in a complete fiasco: the forces of revenge were rising again across the Rhine. At the end of 1950, the French government, headed, by the way, by René Pleven, de Gaulle's comrade-in-arms from the London times, agreed in principle to the remilitarisation of West Germany. Everything that had been won by desperate effort during the war, when de Gaulle fought the Allies like a lion to protect France's rights, had been thrown to the winds. Under those conditions, discontinuing R.P.F. activities seemed completely unjustified to de Gaulle.

In a burst of energy, the General tried to fan the initial fervour of the Rally for the French People. Again grandiose rallies were held and a loud propaganda campaign was mounted. He made 30 speeches in 15 days. De Gaulle's fear-inspiring voice again predicted a perilous destiny to France unless it voted for the R.P.F.

De Gaulle counted on his candidates obtaining an absolute majority everywhere. He therefore even neglected to conclude any pre-election alliances. He self-confidently made "an appointment in the Champs-Élysées" with his adherents after the victory. One of the men close to de Gaulle, Gaston Palewski, made this promise on the eve of the elections: "The R.P.F. parliamentary group will be by far the most numerous in the Assembly... Without delay, the government of public salvation will be able to form itself, around General de Gaulle, with the Rally as its axis."

The voting took place on June 17, 1951. The R.P.F. received four million votes and 118 seats in the Chamber. That was, of course, quite a good deal compared to the other non-Communist parties. The Socialists got 104 seats; the M.R.P., 85; the Radicals, 94; the Rights, 98. But this result fell far short of de Gaulle's optimistic expectations. He himself referred to it as "limited". The losses of the R.P.F., compared with 1947, were enormous. The 118 seats won by the R.P.F. were insufficient even to make a decisive impact on the government majority, let alone to form a government of "public salvation". It was thus a complete failure as far as the goals set by de Gaulle were concerned.

This result also assumed a special significance against the background of the achievements of the Communist Party. Since 1947, it had been the object of numerous attacks from all sides. Not only the R.P.F. but all the other parties as well waged a fierce campaign against the Communists. The whole might of the mass media and all kinds of police, administrative, and financial pressure were set in motion. The Communists were branded as "separatists",

"Soviet agents", etc. But the party of the French working class withstood the onslaught. It received more than five millions of votes during the elections and retained the position of the first party of the country, judging by this most important index. It turned out that the party of "separatists" and "foreign agents" had deeper roots in the French people than the Rally for the French people. That was a terrible fact for de Gaulle to face.

In an interview with a journalist he admitted that, although the number of the Communists in France had not grown, "communism made gains in its cohesion, in weight. It is its capacity that increases. The Communists are the only resolute men." That was, in a way, an admission of the failure of the R.P.F.

The General now faced the problem of future R.P.F. tactics. There were two possibilities here: joining the multi-party activities and entering into combinations with the governing majority, thus getting bits of power here and there, along with the other parties of the hated "system"; or else taking up an uncompromising position and continuing the fight against the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle chose the second path. The R.P.F. group in parliament was to block and undermine the action of the parliamentary mechanism. De Gaulle said: "It is necessary to overthrow the governments systematically. That is the only means of coming to power."

But by no means all of the deputies of the R.P.F. parliamentary group desired to annihilate traditional parliamentarism and the multi-party system just as fervently as the chief of the R.P.F. himself. Many of them preferred the parliamentary game, which opened a way to ministerial portfolios and a career. That led to the sensational desertion of 27 R.P.F. deputies who voted, despite de Gaulle's opinion, for the government of Antoine Pinay, the leader of the Right party of the Independents. The betrayal of the group of Gaullists was all the more scandalous that Pinay had been a member of the Vichy State Council and now implemented a policy decidedly contradicting de Gaulle's demands. The General responded to this event with these bitter words: "I did not save France to hand it over to M. Pinay..."

In April 1953, the R.P.F. suffered a crushing defeat in the municipal elections, gathering a mere 10 per cent of the vote. On May 6, 1953, General de Gaulle admitted the defeat of the R.P.F. and gave its deputies complete freedom of action in parliament. That was a dignified gesture, the most worthy of his name in the entire ignominious affair of the R.P.F.

Although de Gaulle recognised the need for reticence and even hypocrisy in politics, he sometimes evinced uncommon honesty and frankness, compared to all the other French political leaders. His conversations at the time of the R.P.F. failure reveal a sense of bitterness, disappointment and hurt that those R.P.F. leaders made

him feel who, on getting their seats and concerned only with their careers, were ready to act under any political camouflage. He said of them with disdain: "The bourgeois dust has dissipated." As for his own fate, the General viewed it pessimistically: "That is the end of my actions under the present regime." He spoke of death, he said that he would only be understood many years later. Here is one of the gloomy declarations of those days: "The era of giants had come to an end. Roosevelt has disappeared, Stalin is dead, Churchill is going to quit the scene, and de Gaulle is no longer in business."

Still, his exceptional energy, vital force and restless temperament protested against his final retirement. In those days he gave a long interview to the journalist Jean-Raymond Tournoux, in which he expressed a very pessimistic view of many phenomena, particularly those in France. But he ended on an optimistic note, referring to a future "internal June 18". "This time," he said, "the 18th of June will not happen in London... If I have to repeat the 18th of June, I must have a nucleus around me." Yes, he was a man of action indeed, but again he had to go back to his village, to his tower, and, unlike 1946, his retirement was not very honourable. Jean Lacouture writes: "This time he did not return there as a hero too great for ordinary little men, but as a prophet who had cried himself hoarse but whom no one had heard."

After the failure of the R.P.F., de Gaulle's life entered a period the Gaullists called "crossing the desert", which lasted until 1958. The number of the General's followers dropped sharply, and his prestige also declined. True, he remained a living embodiment of one of the most dramatic moments in French history, but his influence on the country's political life had been undermined by the R.P.F. venture. De Gaulle once said that "nothing succeeds like success", or words to that effect; and he had suffered a defeat this time.

Through the hedge surrounding the Boisserie park, the inhabitants of Colombey often saw the General's lonely figure. Leaning on a stick, he walked among trees and shrubs. He once said that he had made fifteen thousand rounds like that. Sometimes he took a car, drove to a nearby forest and took long walks there. At home, the General killed the time by playing patience. That was what he now needed most, patience, but not at card playing. And what could the cards tell him when his constant partners in conversation were France herself and History itself? "In the tumult of men and events," the General wrote, "solitude was my temptation; now it is my friend. What other satisfaction can be sought once you have confronted history? Moreover, this section of Champagne is imbued with calm—wide, mournful horizons..."

A man of extensive intellectual interests, de Gaulle escaped into the beloved world of books. He spent most of the day in his study in the tower, behind the writing table. He read a great deal, communing again with Bergson, Barrès, Péguy, Saint-Simon, La Rochefoucauld, Valéry. Even when he had his hands full dealing with the affairs of state, the General found time to satisfy his constant spiritual thirst. He insisted that "the true school of command was general culture". He believed that underlying the victories of Alexander the Great was the spirit of Aristotle, and those of Caesar, the culture of Cicero. In re-reading Chateaubriand, he always stopped to ponder over his maxim: "Ambition without competence is a crime." Indeed, to rule means to foresee, and to foresee, one has to know a great deal. De Gaulle meditated on his recent past and tried to discern the hazy outlines of the future.

He took special care to keep up with the new literature on the history of the Second World War. He read the works of German generals describing their recent campaigns and their sad outcome. The most unexpected books appeared on his table—on gardening, aerodynamics, horse-breeding, hunting and shooting, etc. He showed a lively interest in new books, in works awarded literary prizes. Extravagant productions, like "the New Wave" novels, did not excite much enthusiasm in him, but he liked Françoise Sagan's novels, which he found classical in their art of the plot, the style, the fulness of feeling. He read Jean-Paul Sartre. The General highly praised the work of his comrade-in-arms, André Malraux, and as for the articles of François Mauriac, he said that they "drew the tears from most eyes". One would be interested to know whether he meant such views of Mauriac on the General's activities at the head of the R.P.F. as this: "I was for de Gaulle, as long as I thought that he could prevent us from taking sides in the Cold War. Now I am disconcerted, because de Gaulle seems to think that war is inevitable. If France and the world are to be saved, it can only be by people who do *not* consider war inevitable." However, now that the R.P.F. venture was over, everything indicated the end of disagreements between de Gaulle and François Mauriac.

De Gaulle read in one sitting Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. He said pensively: "In fact, the old man, that's me... For me, it's a question of getting to port before the sharks leave nothing but a great fishbone of me."

On the whole, his life in those years became simpler, more ordinary, a normal life of a middle-aged man. Before 1940, he had been isolated from that life; he had seen no people except soldiers, and his "life space" was limited by the horizon of military service. Later, the exceptional role of the leader of Free France, head of the Provisional Government, and chief figure of the R.P.F., created a distance that made difficult ordinary ties with people, or any spontaneity in contacts with them. He was now closer to ordinary human needs, to his home, the neighbours in Colombey. The *Connétable* seemed to have stepped down from the high pedestal on which he had stood, statue-like. Once a week he usually drove to Paris, where he always stayed in Room 11 at the Lapérouse Hotel. His secretariat still had its offices in the Rue Solférino; it was then engaged in winding up the affairs of the R.P.F. Olivier Guichard, the eternal *portier* of that hotel, arranged meetings between the General and all sorts of men, but such meetings were becoming ever rarer. At 63, de Gaulle had changed some of his habits. For instance, he stopped smoking, of which he was very proud. The way in which he did that reflects one of his character traits. Whether in great things or small, de Gaulle would always create irreversible situations for himself. The General thus advised his secretary Guichard,

who also wanted to quit smoking but did not know how: "That is very simple. Just tell your chief, your wife or your secretary that you will stop smoking as of tomorrow. That is enough."

Yes, his life had become much quieter and more serene, outwardly, but it still held a great deal of grief for him. His nineteen-year-old daughter Anne died. The General had always been touchingly tender with her, he spent hours playing with her, and somehow managed to get copies of Disney cartoons. The grown-up girl had the mentality of a child... She was buried in the cemetery at Colombey. When the grave was filled with earth Charles de Gaulle said to his wife: "Do not cry, now she is at last like all the others."

In general, "crossing the desert" proved to be a hard task. The scorching hot sand in which the feet sank, the agonising thirst, mirages along the way that seemed to be endless—all of this de Gaulle had to go through in the oppressive situation under the Fourth Republic. The tiny oasis in Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises proved to be defenceless against the burning winds blowing from the world of politics. With each passing day de Gaulle became more and more firmly convinced that he had led his initially numerous army, later so quickly dispersed, in the wrong direction, that the danger at which he pointed had proved to be non-existent, while the real threat had become by 1953 truly frightening.

In his activity as head of the R.P.F. de Gaulle had been inspired by the hope of founding a republican monarchy in the spirit of his declaration at Bayeux, but power would only be a means in the struggle for the greatness of France, for its rise on the international scene. However, the pathological anti-Communism of the R.P.F. in fact resulted in France being thrown back from the road of greatness into the crowd of West European satellites of the U.S.A. It was no longer the attainment of greatness that was at stake but the existence of France as an independent state. While de Gaulle had busily stirred up fear of the Soviet bogymen, the real danger of subordination of Paris to Washington had grown. In the end, de Gaulle could not fail to see the true meaning of events. On March 10, 1954, he frankly expressed something of which he had been convinced a year before: "The Russians do not want to start a war. It is as clear as noonday. Moreover, they have never wanted to fight a war."

At the same time de Gaulle raised the alarm, insistently repeating, "The country is in danger!" He now saw that the danger lay in the monstrous enterprise called the European Defence Community. De Gaulle called it "a military Babel without virtues ... a puzzle for experts ... a strange plan of geometers", etc. He was indignant that, as a result, "Germany would be rearmed and France liquidated!"

The plan for a European Defence Community had been prompted by Washington. It had a kind of pre-history. Soon after de Gaulle's

retirement in January 1946, his successors proposed various plans for what they called the European union. It was suggested to unite a group of West European countries in a single superstate liquidating the historically formed nations and merging them in a single "European" nation with a common parliament and government. The purpose of the whole project was to consolidate the capitalist system and to weaken the Communist movement in Western Europe. In 1948, the Strasbourg Assembly, the embryo of the European parliament, came into being, but it had no real power. In 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community of the six countries of what was called "lesser Europe" (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) emerged. Customs borders were eliminated in heavy industry and coal mining. De Gaulle was from the outset against these measures, as they involved elimination of what he thought to be the necessary and the only possible form of the peoples' historical existence—the national states. De Gaulle made frequent slighting references to the initiators of the European projects headed by his former ministers Georges Bidault and Jean Monnet, and also Robert Schuman, leader of the M.R.P. De Gaulle said of this latter half-German and former Vichy supporter that "his feet were in Paris and his heart in Berlin".

The General had long been indignant about France's policy of surrender over the German question. The numerous governments of the Fourth Republic (in which the portfolio of the Minister for Foreign Affairs was invariably in the hands of either Schuman or Bidault) gave up, with astonishing ease, the rights and possibilities largely acquired by de Gaulle at the end of the war. The demands to annex the Ruhr, the left bank of the Rhine, etc. had long been forgotten. The leaders of the Fourth Republic had become reconciled with the restoration of the might of West Germany, which demanded political equality with France. But Schuman and Bidault went farther in their concessions to Bonn than Adenauer in his extortion. In the autumn of 1950, the French ministers reached the limit: under pressure from Washington, they agreed in principle to the restoration of Wehrmacht in West Germany. But, foreseeing the indignation of the French people, they tried to camouflage that unconditional surrender by an incredible machination tantamount to national suicide. The idea of a "European army" was born. In October 1950, this plan was put forward by none other than René Pleven, de Gaulle's former companion-in-arms from the London times and now Prime Minister. An attempt was made to combine the incompatible—to give West Germany the right to arm itself and at the same time to deprive it of the chance to have an army of its own command and General Staff. Separate military units consisting of Germans would become part of the "European army", that is, the integrated army of the six countries. France, just as Italy and

the Benelux countries, would give up its armed forces. As for the "European army" as a whole, it would come under N.A.T.O. command, that is to say, it would be run by the Americans. De Gaulle's attitude to this project is easy to imagine. Insisting that "France was created by sword blows", he had always believed that there was no France without an army, and that the history of France was the history of her army, without which there could be neither independence nor greatness. At first de Gaulle even refused to believe that such incredible projects could be seriously entertained as a "European army", which he described as a "bad joke". But there was too much ruthless truth in the joke. In May 1952, Bidault signed, on behalf of France, the treaty on the setting up of the European Defence Community. It only had to be ratified now, and the history of an independent French army would end.

At one of the last sittings of the National Council of the R.P.F. de Gaulle reproduced the working out of the treaty on the European Defence Community in the form of a dramatic dialogue. The Americans told the French: "Germany must rebuild its forces. Their forces will be merged with yours in a stateless organism run by American command, which, by the force of circumstances, will inevitably become the military instrument of German policy. "So, give us your army!" And they heard in reply: "Here, take what for a thousand years has been the French army and dissolve it in this monstrous organism! Here is even a project for a 'European army', of our own invention, in which our army will disappear, body and soul!"

On February 25, de Gaulle gave a special press conference on the question of the European Defence Community at the Continental. He said: "This treaty, combined with the present American policy, clearly leads to the military and political hegemony of the Reich in Europe." He then reminded his audience of the war experiences, when the actions that ensured the status of a victorious power for France only proved possible because de Gaulle had an independent army, however small it might be, which he commanded as he saw fit, even against the wishes of the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

"If, during the last conflict, the French government of war and liberation had been tied to such a regime; if in the coalition in which it was a party, it had not retained the right and the means to dispose of the French forces, in the last resort, and had not availed itself of them to impose the indispensable, Koenig would not have been at Bir-Hakeim, Juin would not have played in Italy the role which we all know, Leclerc would not have taken Fezzan and would not have been moved, when it was necessary, on Paris, de Lattre would not have defended Alsace, or crossed the Rhine and the Danube, Larminat would not have destroyed the pockets

[of German resistance] near the Atlantic, Doyen would not have made sure of Tend and Brigue, and the expeditionary force would not have been sent to Indochina. I am citing here only the military episodes, without recalling those numerous and great political difficulties which arose between ourselves and our Allies and which we would not have surmounted if our own means, however reduced they may have been, had not continued to belong to us. It is well known that, if things had been different, the government that would have been established in France after the Liberation would have been the A.M.G.O.T., neither more nor less, that is to say, a foreign government. Pleven, Queuille, Jacquinet, Bidault, Mayer, Auriol, you who took part in all this and who were my ministers, I cannot believe that you should have forgotten all this."

De Gaulle's opposition to the European Defence Community met with a great response. In general, the plan for the remilitarisation of West Germany and creating a "European army" had run in France into a strong opposition of extensive and varied political forces. The Communist Party, defending the interests of France and of peace in Europe, fought against the E.D.C. A considerable part of the Radicals, the Socialists, of all the parties except the M.R.P. (there were only individual opponents there), rejected the E.D.C. treaty. As a result, the country found itself split. This was a greatly changed form of the division that existed during the war, when two hostile centres of gravitation emerged, Vichy and the Resistance, the pro-German faction and the anti-German one. De Gaulle sensed at once that under the prevailing conditions the R.P.F. did not help him but, on the contrary, was a hindrance in his fight against the E.D.C. His actions as the leader of a Rightist, anti-democratic party that was losing any vestige of influence, were one thing, while the actions of the leader of the Resistance, unconnected with any parties and concerned entirely with the defence of national independence were quite another. In this last case his actions assumed greater weight and influence, they no longer encountered the prejudiced attitude of the opponents of the R.P.F. These considerations (along with the failure of the R.P.F. during the elections) were a serious factor in compelling de Gaulle to expedite the cessation of R.P.F. activities in May 1953. He now had greater freedom of action, for he no longer felt bound by an organisation which merely compromised him.

Announcing the end of R.P.F. activities, de Gaulle declared at the same time that the deputies from that party were free to act as they thought best. There were more than a hundred of them in the National Assembly, so that the destiny of the treaty to be ratified by the Assembly largely depended upon them. In this respect, they were still loyal to de Gaulle, although on the other questions they acted with considerable freedom and had long begun to take

part in coalition governments. Thus there was still a Gaullist faction in the National Assembly on which de Gaulle could rely in his fight against the E.D.C.

After the demise of the R.P.F., the General made a kind of pause and spoke against the "European army" publicly only on November 12, 1953. He repeated his theses against the E.D.C. that threatened to deprive France of her army and, consequently, of her independence, to weaken its links with the colonies, and to open the way to German hegemony in Europe. Of special interest was de Gaulle's alternative to the E.D.C. project and to other ideas of uniting the six nations in one superstate, propounded in that speech. Instead of a federation or merging of the six countries, the General proposed a confederation, whose members would retain complete independence. He condemned the relations between the U.S.A. and Western Europe, calling them a protectorate system. He again put forward the idea of an independent Europe which he first formulated at the end of the war. Particularly significant in this statement was the reminder that France was the Soviet Union's ally. "I do not forget," said de Gaulle, "that Europe stretches from Gibraltar to the Urals, and, whatever my opinion on certain regimes, I have been to Moscow just as I have been to London and Brussels... If you ask me, anyone may be a party to a united Europe who wants it sincerely."

The struggle around the ratification of the E.D.C. treaty became more and more acute. Like the Dreyfus affair, the problem of ratification produced a national crisis. E.D.C. supporters increased pressure on the deputies. To influence them additional protocols were worked out allegedly attenuating the consequences of the treaty so pernicious for France. The U.S.A. blackmailed France using the threat of a "painful reappraisal" of its policy in Europe. Despite all this, a majority hostile to the ratification was taking shape in the National Assembly.

Early in 1954, one of the most reactionary and pro-American governments came to power. It was headed by Joseph Laniel, an industrialist from Normandy of whom it was said that he "believed in God, luck, and getting American credits". Once upon a time, at de Gaulle's apotheosis in Paris on August 26, 1944, Laniel marched at the General's side during the triumphal progress along the Champs-Élysées. Now he ignored everything but the wishes of Washington, preparing a secret agreement on US open involvement in the Indochina war that was the source of France's humiliating defeats and dire misfortunes. Georges Bidault, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the same government, did all he could to pressure the French parliament into ratifying the treaty on a "European army", sabotaging at the same time all attempts to achieve peace in Indochina. In the spring, France found itself on the threshold of a most

acute crisis produced by the policies of the Laniel-Bidault government, which ended in their resignation in May 1954. This time it was more than an ordinary government crisis— it was a serious political shift. As a result, the government of the Radical Mendès-France came to power. The new Premier at first enjoyed support in parliament. For the first time since 1947, the Communists gave him a vote of confidence. Mendès-France promptly concluded peace in Indochina and introduced the question of ratification of the E.D.C. treaty in the National Assembly. He took an impartial position on that issue. The critical moment of the struggle that had continued for several years now came. Of decisive significance for the outcome of that struggle was the negative attitude of the majority of the French people to the "European army". This attitude predetermined, to some extent or other, the position of all the political parties. It was expressed with the greatest consistency in the activities of the Communist Party. But de Gaulle's negative position was also of immense importance. A broad coalition of national forces was spontaneously formed, embracing extremely diverse social elements and largely reminiscent of the political make-up of the Resistance. De Gaulle's opposition to E.D.C. somewhat strengthened his prestige shaken by the R.P.F. activities, confirming his reputation as a firm defender of the national interest.

On August 30, 1954, the historical session of the National Assembly of France was held at which the E.D.C. treaty was rejected. The persistent attempts of the U.S.A. to thrust on France a plan that would be fatal to its sovereignty ended in failure. US State Secretary Dulles, called the events of August 30, 1954 a "tragedy". For France, they were a victory, which restored for some time the prestige and independence of her foreign policy.

De Gaulle believed the rejection of the E.D.C. treaty to be the first sign in eight years of the sound spirit of France, an indication that the country rejected the status of an American satellite, and an expression of the universal will toward defending national independence. "A wind blew through the country, making the people raise their heads higher," said General de Gaulle.

Time passed, however, but there were no signs that his cherished dream of liquidating the Fourth Republic and establishing his strong power was more attainable now. On the contrary, the R.P.F.'s successors, who now posed as "Socialist Republicans", did not extend their sphere of influence in the least. Besides, not many deputies of the defunct R.P.F. remained loyal to their chief. General de Gaulle continued to enjoy considerable prestige, of course; he was visited and consulted by such major political figures as Mendès-France or Edgar Faure. But what was there in it for him but certain moral recognition of his past services?

The main thing that distressed de Gaulle was the numerous signs of his declining influence on the masses. As if trying to feel the pulse of the nation, he announced that, for the first time since 1945, he would take part in the solemn ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Victory Day. This was reported in the newspapers beforehand, and the Parisians were invited to come to the Champs-Élysées. But when the General arrived at the Arc de Triomphe, he saw that the crowd was too small, and the enthusiasm of the people was less than moderate. The General failed to hear again the "voice of the crowd", which he always took as a decisive sign.

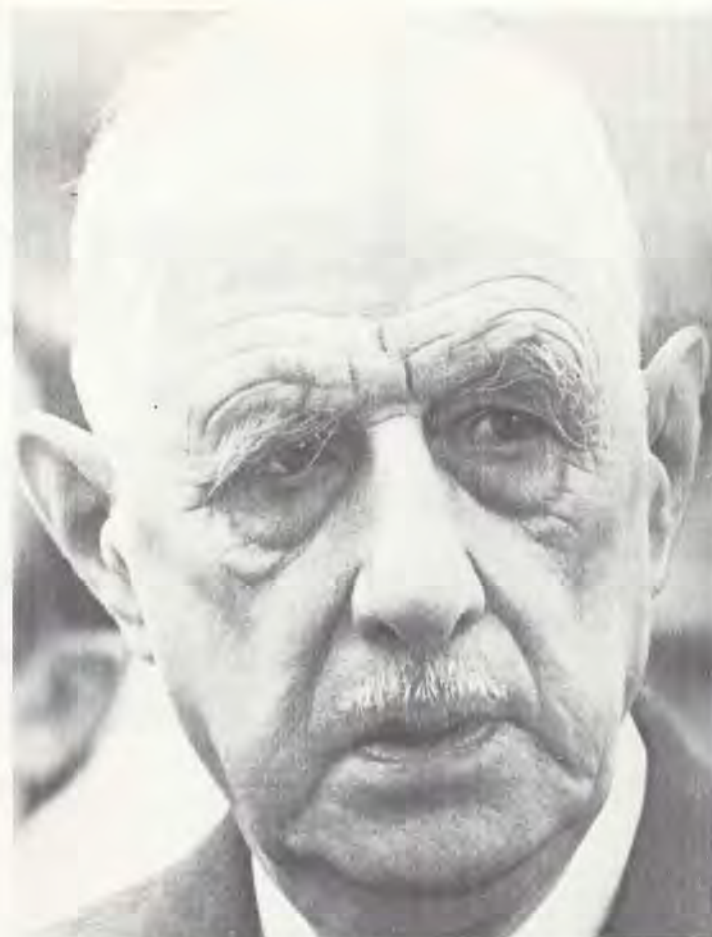
In a private conversation soon afterward, the General said with bitterness: "Imagine, after the Liberation, I have tried three times to save the country. Three times I have failed. I wanted to give France a constitution which she needs. I took the staff of a pilgrim. I was not listened to. That was the first failure. I created the R.P.F. I believed that with 'the Rally' one could take again in one's hands the destiny of the nation... But 'the Rally' broke up in 1952. Second failure. I was persuaded to go to the Arc de Triomphe on the occasion of the tenth Anniversary of the Victory. Everyone said that the people of Paris would be there to applaud me. I went to l'Etoile on May 10, 1955. The people did not fill the Champs-Élysées. The third failure."

General de Gaulle decided to stand apart from the internal strife, in a lonely position of impartiality and superiority. It was, perhaps, yet another attempt to get rid of the odious stamp of the R.P.F. On July 2, 1955 he held a press conference.

"It has been more than a year since we met," he told the journalists. "Everything makes one predict that a long time will pass before we meet again. My intention is, in effect, not to interfere in what is commonly known as 'the conduct of public affairs'."

Taking a historical view of himself, he enunciated something like a political testament. De Gaulle gave a pessimistic assessment of the situation in the country. Though not in the slashing aggressive tones of the R.P.F. times, he condemned the Fourth Republic system as "inconsistent and therefore out-of-date". But he did not fully give up all hopes for the future: "In its depths, the country is recovering its vitality. The troubles of the world break against our shores. Without daring to predict as yet what factor or event will bring about a change in the regime, one may believe that the shock will come."

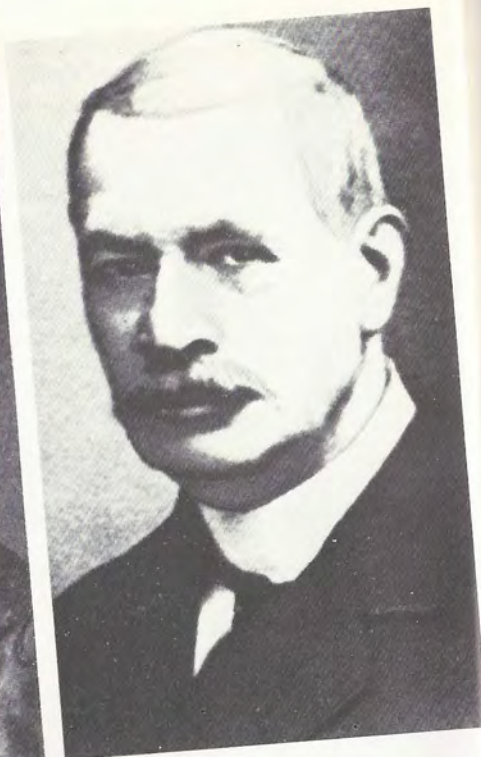
The General then made a critical review of the principal problems of foreign policy. As for the domestic affairs, de Gaulle stressed that he was not at all interested in the coming elections of 1956. He ended with the words: "I am saying goodbye to you ... and perhaps for a long time to come."



De Gaulle



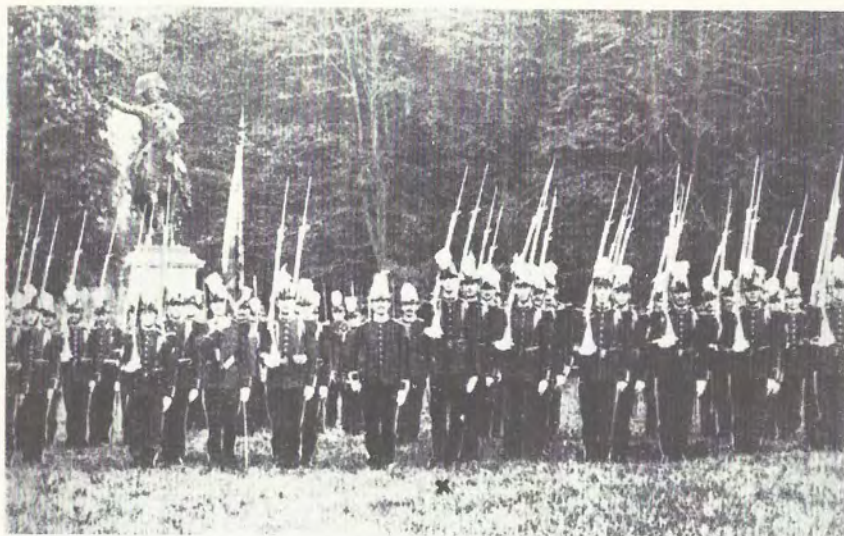
Jeanne de Gaulle (née Maillot)



Henri de Gaulle



Charles de Gaulle at Saint-Cyr



Charles de Gaulle (marked by a cross) in the ranks



Charles de Gaulle, Commander of the 507 Armoured Regiment



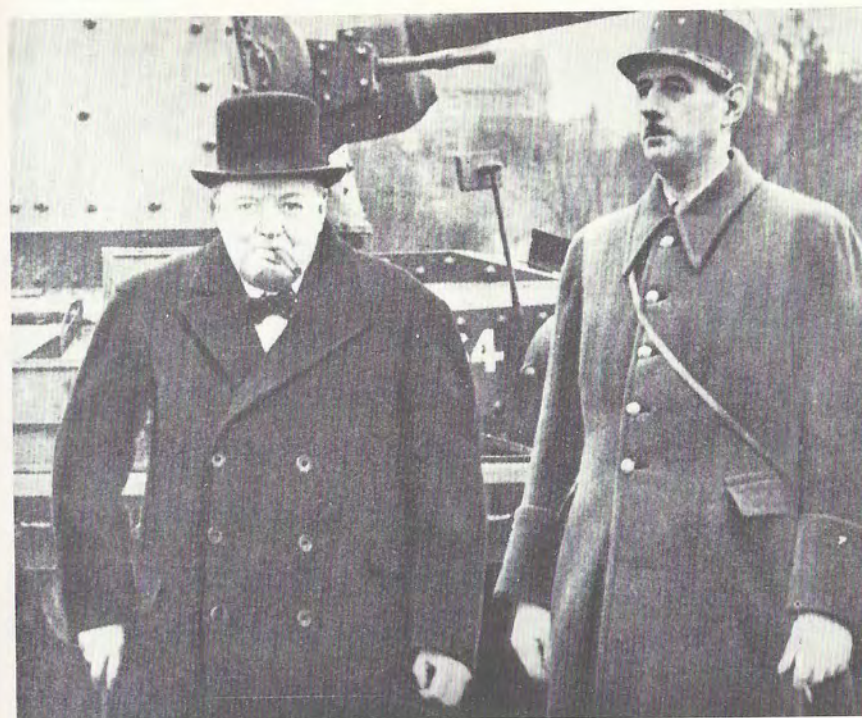
On board a warship



June 18, 1940. At the BBC studio



A leaflet with the text of de Gaulle's appeal of June 18, 1940



Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill



The meeting at Casablanca



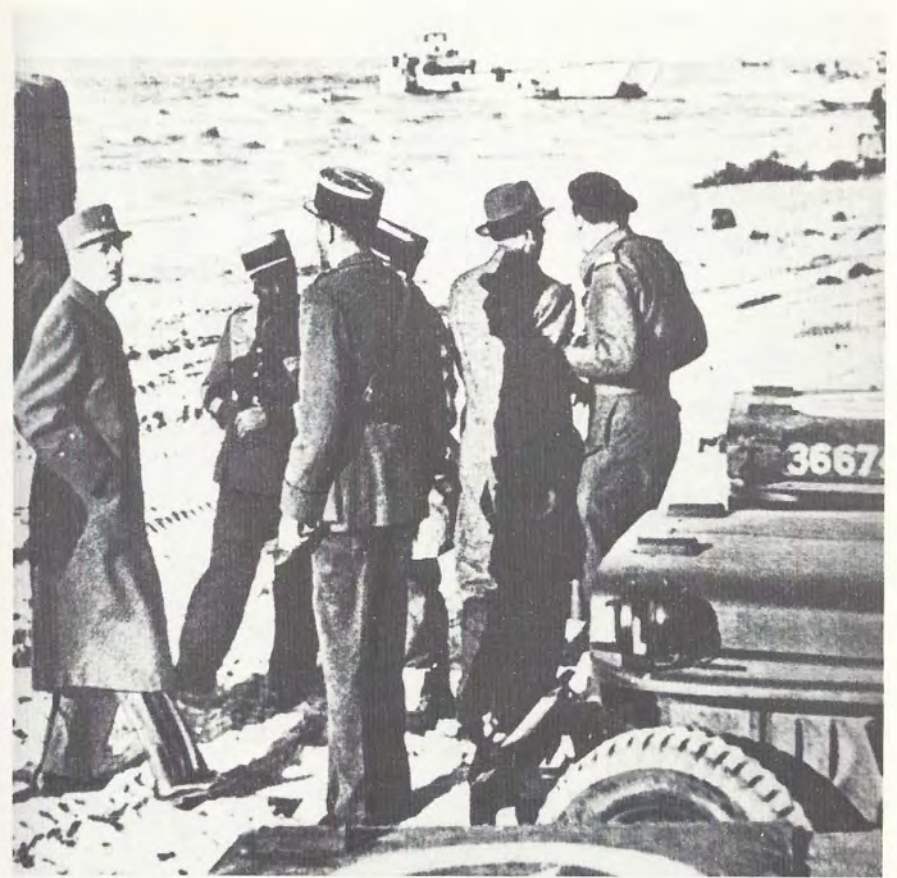
Jean Moulin, Chairman of the National Council of the Resistance



Nazi execution of Resistance fighters



Arrival at Algiers on May 30, 1943



June 14, 1944. De Gaulle on liberated territory



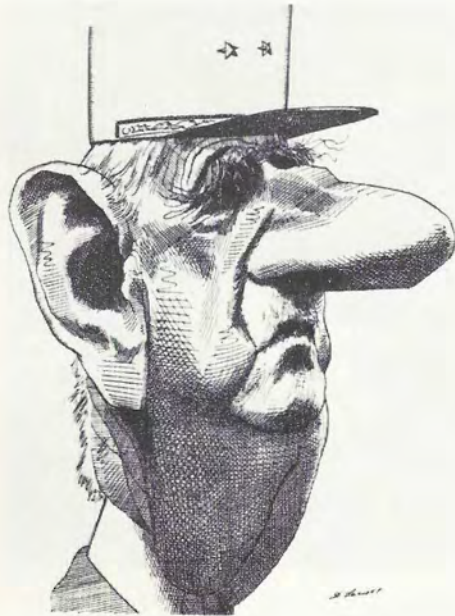
Visits to the first of the liberated territories



August 26, 1944. The beginning of the procession through the liberated capital



January 1946. The Cape of Antibes



A caricature of de Gaulle



Charles de Gaulle and his wife watching the Tour de France in a crowd of Colombey inhabitants



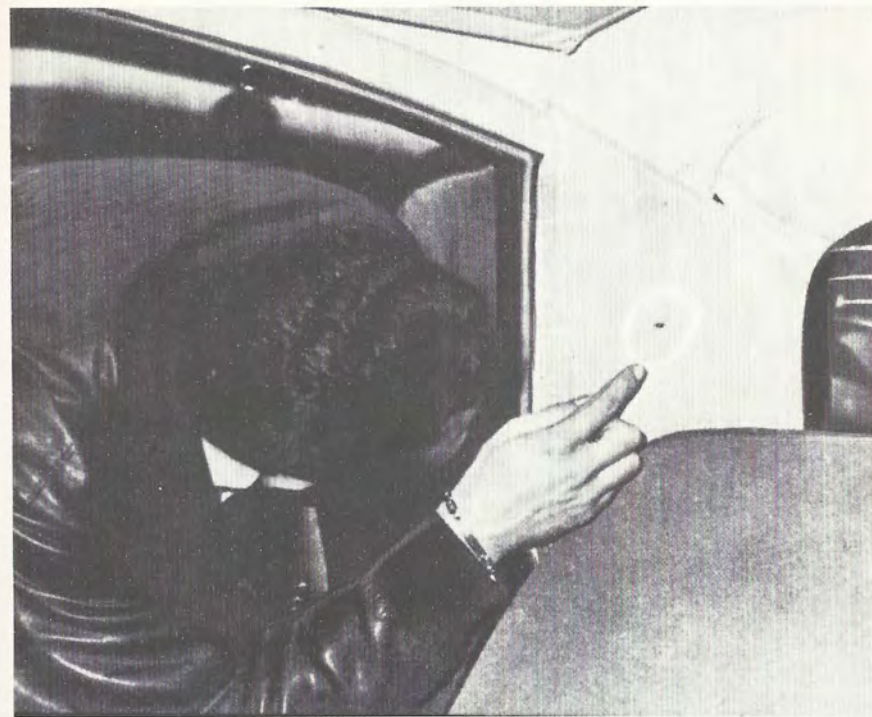
Charles de Gaulle and his wife Mme Yvonne de Gaulle at Colombey



June 4, 1958. A speech in Algiers



April 23, 1961. De Gaulle speaking on TV during the "generals' rebellion".



Assassination attempt at Petit-Clamart. The General's bullet-ridden car



June 1966. General de Gaulle among Soviet people



June 1966. General de Gaulle at a Soviet plant



De Gaulle in May 1968



May 1968. The Latin Quarter



November 1970, Colombey. De Gaulle's last picture



Charles de Gaulle's funeral on November 12, 1970 at Colombey

De Gaulle's "last" press conference took place soon after the publication of the first volume of his *War Memoirs*. The second volume would appear in 1956, the third, in 1959. Since the General wrote this major political and literary work in the years of "crossing the desert", it will be appropriate to characterise it here in brief, although a careful reader must have already formed a certain impression of it from the numerous passages cited above. The memoirs are de Gaulle's self-portrait, they show him the way he would have liked to appear to his contemporaries and future generations. They are naturally very subjective, as any memoirs are likely to be. But de Gaulle's intellectual sincerity makes them, regardless of the author's will, a portrait, that is, a description of the author the way he actually was. The *War Memoirs* are the history of a definite period as de Gaulle saw it. The historical nature of the work is emphasised by the extensive documentary appendices to each volume. It is well known, however, that precise reproduction of documents is by no means a sufficient condition for truly reflecting an epoch. The selection of documents is much more important. It is typical in this respect that the memoirs do not comprise many important documents of the times. For instance, one will not find there the programme of the National Council of the Resistance, the documents of the French Communist Party, and a great deal more.

The description of the events is also, naturally, very biased. The analysis and evaluation of these events are fully in conformity with the author's worldview. He simply ignores the elementary requirements of the scientific, sociological approach, preferring his own intuition and personal views to all that. However, as La Bruyère, one of the French moralists most valued by de Gaulle, wrote, "a certain ... narrow-mindedness helps some men to walk the path of wisdom".

This is true of many of de Gaulle's practical actions as well as of his judgements of men and events. The memoirs contain a great many interesting and original evaluations, characterisations and ideas. They were written with exceptional conscientiousness. Unlike such memorialists as, let us say, Churchill, de Gaulle did not employ numerous literary and scholarly assistants. Only René Thibault, formerly of Free France, and later an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, helped him to select the documents; the General's daughter Elisabeth typed the MS, while Georges Pompidou conducted the negotiations with the *Librairie Plon* Publishers. De Gaulle took great pains in drafting and re-writing the MS, in selecting the materials and in patiently polishing the literary form of the memoirs. He endeavoured to make them not only a political but also a literary event, and he fully succeeded in that.

Louis François, Inspector General of the people's education and de Gaulle's former cypherer from the times when he commanded the 4th Armoured Division, declared to the General on his visit to Colombey: "You are a great classical writer." De Gaulle replied: "Ah, but it does not come easily. This is a torture. See, three rough drafts preceding each page. My daughter Elisabeth types them on the machine, and I correct once again the three leaflets... Basically, I recur again and again to an eight-foot rhythm. Believe you me, this is ghastly toil." On another occasion he said: "If I have the immodesty to imagine that I am a writer, I have always experienced a great difficulty in writing. It is slow work... You get on, or you don't... And, in my case, it is always hard work."

De Gaulle did not cease to correct the MS until the last possible moment. In preparing the first volume of the memoirs for publication, he had twelve sessions with the literary editor of the *Librairie Plon*. Even a bare list of titles consisting, as a rule, of one word, indicates painstaking work, exceptional attention to literary form and structure, and a desire to attain classical perfection. The first volume of *War Memoirs* is called *The Call to Honour (L'Appel)* and consists of eight chapters: "The Slope" (*La Pente*), "The Fall" (*La Chute*), "Free France" (*La France libre*), "Africa" (*L'Afrique*), "London" (*Londres*), "The Middle East" (*L'Orient*), "The Allies" (*Les Alliés*), "Fighting France" (*La France Combattante*). The second volume, *Unity (L'Unité)*, also has eight chapters: "Interlude" (*Intermède*), "Tragedy" (*Tragédie*), "Comedy" (*Comédie*), "Algiers" (*Alger*), "Politics" (*Politique*), "Diplomacy" (*Diplomatie*), "Battle" (*Combat*), "Paris". The third volume is entitled *Salvation (Le Salut)* and falls into seven chapters: "Liberation" (*La Libération*), "Status" (*Le Rang*), "Order" (*L'Ordre*), "Victory" (*La Victoire*), "Discord" (*Discordance*), "Disunion" (*Désunion*) and "Departure" (*Départ*).

The Gaullist idea of the nation as an absolute value and the concept of relativity and ephemerality of all political theories, ideological systems, and party passions, stand out in all the three volumes of the memoirs. De Gaulle solves all questions on the basis of the "iron law of the national interests". In his mind, these interests are not associated at all with the interests of social groups or classes, or even with the concrete destinies of men comprising the nation at a definite historical moment. The nation emerges in its thousand-year-long past and future, fused in abstract unity through a mystic faith in the image of France, a faith that de Gaulle himself feels and which he wants to rouse in others through his own personality. De Gaulle resolutely denies everyone else the right to a genuine understanding of France's national interests; this is a right he especially denies the Communists, for whom the national interests coincide with those of all the French working people and are

simultaneously combined with internationalism, that is, solidarity with the working people of all the countries. De Gaulle's memoirs are full of unjustified statements on the activities of the French Communists, imbued with class prejudice, suspicions and distrust, though on some occasions de Gaulle recognises the services the Communists rendered to the country, as well as their strength and authority.

The French people also occupies a very interesting place in the memoirs. Very little is said of the people's concrete needs and aspirations. The meaning of the people's existence is ensuring the grandeur of France. The people appears only as a crowd inspired and directed by the leader, who is the only one with the right to understand and express the nation's interests. Descriptions of de Gaulle's meetings with the people figure prominently in the memoirs, and the people always feel "indescribable enthusiasm", "an extraordinary emotion", they "burst into bravos", etc. Such events undoubtedly took place, as in Paris on August 26, 1944. But they appear in the memoirs as the most desirable method of communication between the people and the leader, who thus relies on the blind, purely emotional moods of the crowd, on the psychological phenomenon of mass ecstasy.

General de Gaulle often refers to his personal role in the events. When the reader of *War Memoirs* sees these characteristics for the first time, they inevitably strike him as unusual, to say the least. One gets the impression of morbid vanity and self-conceit. Here is a description of his own role in the Free France period in the first volume of the memoirs: "The fact of embodying for my comrades the fate of our cause, for the French multitude the symbol of its hope, and for foreigners the image of a France indomitable in the midst of her trials, was to dictate my bearing and to impose upon my personality an attitude I could never again change."

In actual fact, though, this is merely an unusual way of expressing an emotion that has nothing in it of the charlatan-like vanity common to many political figures. De Gaulle aspired to glory, only not for the sake of glory itself but for the sake of serving the ideal of eternal France that he carried in his heart.

Alexander Werth wrote quite correctly: "If de Gaulle was deeply conscious of having a mission, he seems to have derived little personal pleasure from his triumphs, lacking completely the plebeian vanity of a Mussolini, a Hitler, or even a Napoleon."

Hence the feeling of tragedy in the description of those situations where de Gaulle failed to serve France in the way he would have liked to serve her. That is particularly true of the last pages of the third volume of the memoirs, describing the circumstances that led to de Gaulle's voluntary retirement in January 1946. It was only during a few brief periods of the General's many years of activity

that the majority of the French people trusted him and his ability to lead the nation. Much more permanent was the gap between de Gaulle and the French people, a gap that was the tragedy of this unusual man's life.

De Gaulle's departure in January 1946 is presented in the memoirs as the conclusion of a great cause begun on June 18, 1940, as the final act of ingratitude to the country's saviour, as a manifestation of the people's terrible failure to understand his role, and a completion of his principal task in life. That is why de Gaulle turns away from the human affairs, drawing instead a picture of his lonely life at Colombey and the scenery surrounding him there:

"Silence fills my house... But how many hours slip by in reading, writing, dreaming, when no illusion sweetens my bitter serenity. ...

"As age triumphs, nature comes closer to me. Each year, in the four seasons which are as so many lessons, I find consolation in her wisdom."

This is followed by a discourse in the spirit of romantic pantheism reminiscent of Chateaubriand on what the seasons tell de Gaulle. The monologue of nature in the role of winter opens with the lines: "Is death's the victory forever? No! Already, deep in my inert soil, a secret labour is being accomplished. Motionless in the heart of darkness, I foresee the marvellous return of light and life!" And then de Gaulle returns to the subject of himself, ending the third volume of *War Memoirs* with these words: "Old man, exhausted by ordeal, detached from human deeds, feeling the approach of the eternal cold, but always watching in the shadows for the gleam of hope!"

He is not only watching "for the gleam of hope"—he does not cease fighting in the solitude of his tower in Colombey. De Gaulle's memoirs are quite definitely an act of political struggle, and a very effective act. He uses every pretext to condemn political intrigues, the traditional party game, parliamentary machinations, that is, everything that characterised the history of the Third Republic, and against which de Gaulle warns postwar France. These passages quite clearly reflect de Gaulle's opinion of the contemporary Fourth Republic system, although he does not mention it directly. He painstakingly recounts all the peripeteias of the struggle against the Allies during the war, clearly setting these actions in contrast to the pro-American servility of his successors. And the main thing that the three volumes prove between the lines is that in a storm, a man like himself should be on the bridge of the French ship.

But the memoirs are only being written, and the helm of the state is as far from his grasp as ever. Nothing pleases him, not even the delighted response to the first volume of the memoirs from such respected men as François Mauriac. What he wants is not praise but power, and the only voice of approval that excites his soul is the

"voice of the crowd" in which he hears the appeal of France herself. But France is silent and concerned with her own affairs. What remains to him is talking to God, and the General often remembers Him. Whenever the future is discussed, the General always says, "If God should let me live..." When the first volume of *War Memoirs* appeared, 55 copies especially printed on the best paper, inscribed by the author, were sent out to persons listed by de Gaulle himself. No. 1 on that list was the Pope.

Admiral d'Argenlieu, former commander of the Free French Navy, sometimes comes to Colombey. The Admiral carries about with him a suitcase with the full vestments of a clergyman and a portable altar. The Admiral changes to his sacerdotal robes and becomes Père Louis. The table in the salon is covered with a white cloth, and the altar is set on it. The General helps the Admiral, or Père Louis, to place the cult objects correctly, acting as a choirboy. Then the General and Mme de Gaulle humbly kneel, and the Mass begins. De Gaulle is often seen in many places of worship during service, beginning with the poor church in Colombey and ending with Notre-Dame de Paris, though he sometimes looks absent-minded during service.

Does he believe in God? His official attitude to the Church is one of emphatic reverence. He is a model practicing Catholic. And still, the question about de Gaulle's religiosity was for some reason asked by many. It would appear that no such question should arise, since de Gaulle always goes to Mass. "Alas," writes Tournoux, "impious Gaullists, they do not believe in the sincerity of that act and—the height of disrespect—one of them even dared to burst out laughing. According to him, de Gaulle does not believe either in God or in the devil. He believes in the good and the bad."

But, on the other hand, in days when things went especially badly, he was several times seen to go alone, suddenly, to a cathedral and kneel there, motionless.

De Gaulle's relations with France are perhaps no more definite than those with God. After the "farewell" press conference in July 1955, the flow of visitors to Colombey noticeably slackened, and the General, too, appeared only rarely in the Rue Solférino. In these months de Gaulle's solitude became more profound, as he silently observed the state of the country. Nothing seemed to indicate his possible return to power. According to a public opinion poll in 1955, only one Frenchman in a hundred would welcome a government headed by de Gaulle. In January 1956, parliamentary elections were held which ended in a complete riot of the "Social Republicans", the successors of the R.P.F. They lost three million votes and a hundred seats in the Assembly, becoming one of the most insignificant groups in it. Contrariwise, the Communists, the Socialists and the other parties of the Left gained considerable

successes. With Communist support, the government of the Socialist Guy Mollet was set up which kept going for more than a year—a record term! Were de Gaulle's repeated statements about the instability of the regime indeed refuted by practical experience? Not so: in reality, that regime was sinking ever deeper in the morass of helplessness. Guy Mollet held on to power only because he renounced his pre-election promises and followed in the wake of the most reactionary, conservative, and adventurist forces. It was exactly in 1956 that the Fourth Republic demonstrated its incredible helplessness, and the name of the recluse from Colombey was more and more often mentioned in the press.

According to the polls, by the middle of the year it was no longer one but eight Frenchmen in a hundred that spoke in favour of a de Gaulle government, for the impotence of the "system" produced widespread discontent.

The war in Algeria, like a malignant tumour, rapidly destroyed the organism of the Fourth Republic. Guy Mollet's government recognised the independence of the neighbouring countries, Tunisia and Morocco, but in the case of Algeria, its policy led France up a blind alley. The complexity and uniqueness of the Algerian problem lay in that, apart from nine million indigenous Arabs, 1,200,000 Europeans, mostly French, lived there. The bourgeois upper stratum of this European minority consisted of died-in-the-wool racists and colonialists who desperately fought against the slightest concessions to the oppressed Arab population. In France itself, Algeria was customarily regarded as part of the country, much like Alsace or Lorraine. At the end of 1954, when a liberation war started in Algeria, all French political parties with the exception of the Communists voted in favour of an armed suppression of the insurgence. Before the elections, Guy Mollet promised to attain a peaceful solution of the Algerian problem. But, once he became head of government, he quickly submitted to the colonialists' demands and expanded the war. The strength of the French army in Algeria now neared half a million, but the military operations did not produce even a semblance of success. The continuation of the war demanded immense resources, manpower, and armaments. The war gave rise to an acute internal strife and undermined the country's international positions.

Beginning with the spring of 1956, the idea was more and more often voiced in the press that the Algerian problem would not be solved by anyone but de Gaulle, that he undoubtedly had his own plan of decisive action for getting France out of a crisis which became increasingly unbearable. At the same time the demands swelled for a state reform, for a decisive consolidation of the executive power, so that it might make decisions and act on them. Major French lawyers proposed projects of state reforms consonant with the ideas constantly advocated by de Gaulle.

In April 1956, there was a spate of prominent visitors to Colombey. At the beginning of May, de Gaulle received Mendès-France, leader of the Radical Party, and Robert Lacoste, Governor-General of Algeria. De Gaulle saw everyone, even Pierre Poujade, leader of the unexpectedly formed group representing the petty bourgeoisie, mostly small tradesmen. Poujade proclaimed the most stunning slogans of an obviously fascist variety. De Gaulle spoke contemptuously about this noisy group which pushed 50 deputies at once into parliament at the 1956 elections: "In my time, the grocers voted for the notaries. Today, the notaries vote for the grocers." But he received Poujade just as cordially as the others. De Gaulle did not say much himself, trying to find out from his visitors what exactly went on in the country.

Meanwhile France suffocated in an atmosphere of incredible confusion and chaos produced by the contradictory and lying declarations and promises of the rival parties. No one could promise anything definite any longer. The feeling of hopelessness permeated the widest sections of society. Against this gloomy background, de Gaulle sounded a strikingly different note in his speech at the unveiling of the monument to Resistance fighters in Aisne in June 1956, his first public appearance in a long time. The General, who had not been heard to say anything in private conversations besides dire prophecies and devastating comments on the politicians in power, seemed transfigured. He said that in the past France had withstood even greater misfortunes, and that he believed in the future of his country. In August, the General went on a long trip; he visited the Antilles and the other French possessions in the Pacific. He was everywhere tumultuously received, and again spoke of his belief in the future: "France must play her role ... and to play her role, she must be France."

While de Gaulle little by little became the symbol of hope, Guy Mollet's ill-starred government pushed the country towards an abyss. That former teacher of English, a timid, vain and weak man, started off on an incredible venture when he came to power. Exploiting the indignation of the French bourgeoisie at the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in Egypt, he decided to open the "second front" of the Algerian war. Guy Mollet made secret agreements with the Israeli Premier Ben Gurion and Britain's Prime Minister Eden, and on October 30 the three nations launched an armed attack against Egypt. That was the shortest war in the history of France, but it also proved the most disgraceful. On November 5, the French troops together with the British, landed in Port Said, and on the 6th the aggressors were compelled to announce the cessation of hostilities. A harsh warning from Moscow, the condemnation of the United Nations, and the refusal of Washington to openly support the aggressors led to an unprecedented, lightning-

quick failure. The situation in Algeria became even worse, for the Algerian patriots were inspired by France's defeat in Suez and doubled their efforts in the war.

General de Gaulle watched these events attentively, although he made no public statements. He knew of the preparations for attacking Egypt; one of the generals kept him informed. In principle, he advocated a most harsh stance towards Egypt. However, he vented his indignation in private conversations at the poor staff work in preparing the operation and in particular at the fact that the command was entirely in British hands. The General contemptuously said to Alain Savary, member of Guy Mollet's government: "So you were towed by Israel and the British! You waited for the English! The English always come too late!"

As a result of Guy Mollet's Suez venture, France lost one third of the oil she needed. The closing of the Suez Canal and its boycott when it was opened also cost France a great deal. Inflation rocketed sky high, while currency reserves were nearly exhausted. In the winter, which happened to be very harsh, the French cities presented a gloomy picture. Strings of cars, for which there was no petroleum, stood motionlessly in the streets, covered with snow. Prices grew sharply. Guy Mollet dealt the system of the Fourth Republic a blow from which it never recovered.

General de Gaulle's feelings were mixed. On the one hand, he saw that the decline of the "system" had sharply accelerated, increasing his chances. On the other hand, he was greatly distressed by France's new defeat, the loss of her vital positions in the Middle East, the country's terrible humiliation and the decline of its prestige in the world. Apart from all that, the General had difficult health problems in the autumn of 1956. "I would not wish my worst enemy to go through the sufferings I have gone through," he said. For several years, his eyesight had been deteriorating, and in November they removed the cataract. He lost a great deal of weight, his eyes sank in and were covered by large dark glasses. He aged considerably. "I do not want to appear in public any more," said the General to his rare visitors wiping his watering eyes.

But he watched the events and invariably appeared at the radio set at news time. His comments on the political world of Paris became more biting: "Bedlam... Masquerade... Hopeless... The puppets... The whole regime is rotten." The General's rich vocabulary was no longer extensive enough to express his feelings, and he made up new words, rhyming *politiciens* and *politiciens*, "politicians" and "politi-dogs", and even *poli-petits-chiens*, "poli-little-dogs".

It is said that a Frenchman who knows the history of his country well will not despair even in the days of misfortunes. And de Gaulle did not only know history well, he also was good at

making it and had patience and staying power. In December 1956 de Gaulle agreed to visit the Saint-Cyr military College where he had been trained nearly half a century before. The old *Saint-Cyrien* was invited to preside over the solemn ceremony of handing over the standards to the new generation by the graduates. Not yet fully recovered from his illness, the 66-year-old General gloomily reviewed the march-past of the cadets. There was a time when he also stood, a rifle on his shoulder, in the ranks of Saint-Cyr, when he also wore the same uniform. But how changed everything had become since those times! The famous military College was no longer in its old place. Its ancient building near Paris, at Saint-Cyr-L'Ecole, had been destroyed in 1944 by the British planes. Now Saint-Cyr was far from the capital, in the military camp Coëtquidan in Brittany.

The position of the French army itself had also changed, and not for the best. After the liberation of France, it had continuously been engaged in dirty wars, first in Indochina, then in Algeria. Recently, it had been exposed to the ignominy of the Suez gamble. And it had always suffered defeats. The yearly crop of graduates of Saint-Cyr and the other military schools was not enough to replace the inglorious losses. Part of the French army was in Europe, but here it was under the Atlantic Bloc's command. Not long before de Gaulle's speech at Saint-Cyr, the news came that, beginning with 1957, the N.A.T.O. forces in Central Europe comprising the French troops would be commanded by the former Hitlerite General Speidel! A great deal had happened since the times when young Charles de Gaulle, inspired by the military romanticism of de Vigny, Péguy, Barrès, dreamed of the future great glory of the French army. Some of the changes would then have seemed to him an absurd nightmare, but now it was all harsh reality.

Yet, steeling his heart, the General tried to inspire in the youth the proud awareness of belonging to the officer corps, something of which he himself had been conscious in his Saint-Cyr days and had retained in spite of everything. In his speech he said: "You have chosen the military profession... You will have to give up freedom, money, and often life itself... This profession demands bitter hours, bad days, and sometimes years of chagrin. But in exchange it gives you ... the honour of maturity, ... the joy of serving, the pride of arms, the hope of grand deeds ... and the finest dream, the dream of glory under the colours."

Tradition and the duty of an old soldier demanded that he should say these things. But de Gaulle was not going to be bound by the tradition and, disdaining all precedent, spoke harshly of the "marasmus" engulfing France. He attacked the "system" threatening the very existence of the army which certain persons wanted to

melt down and drown "in what is referred to as a community, whether 'Atlantic' or 'European'"... "Your career," he said, "begins under conditions that are morally depressing..." Yet de Gaulle ended his speech with an expression of an optimistic faith in the destiny of France: "*Saint-Cyriens*, I am telling you this, I do not despair at all of the future of France." As in all his public speeches, rare at that time, he again sounded the note of hope and confidence.

But this time again de Gaulle said not a word on Algeria, an issue of common concern of which everyone expected him to speak. At the beginning of 1957 it had become perfectly clear that the Algerian drama was nearing its final act. Endless continuation of the war suited no one, but what should the end be? Where was the way out of the cul-de-sac to be sought for, and how? A great many contradictory answers were given to these questions, reflecting the most unexpected and conflicting aspirations, interests and illusions. Somewhat arbitrarily, they may be divided into three main trends.

The extreme colonialist tendency was most clearly expressed by the upper stratum of the European minority in Algeria and was supported by the petty bourgeois in Metropolitan France. These persisted in the view that "Algeria was France", and that the uprising had to be suppressed at any cost, and Algeria then "integrated" with France. The "integration" plan was contradictory and obviously fantastic.

Another trend, towards which ever greater sections of the public in France were inclined, reflected a desire for some kind of compromise to satisfy everyone, from the Algerians fighting for their liberation to the extreme Right colonialists.

The third, the most realistic and far-sighted trend, recognised the inevitability and necessity of granting independence to Algeria. In 1954, at the very beginning of the war in Algeria, no one would hear of this—apart from the Communists. But now common sense began to prevail among growing numbers of the French.

These three basic trends, clashing and interweaving in the consciousness of men, were expressed in an incredibly confused form. The problem of Algeria was hotly debated everywhere—in parliament, at congresses of political parties, in the papers and in private conversations. Impassioned arguments started at family gatherings or among friends sharing a bottle of wine in some *bistro*. France was engaged in a military venture beyond the boundaries of Europe on a greater scale than any other similar event in her history. The war cost four times as much as the ill-fated war in Indochina, but its results were many times as pernicious even then. There were so many ways out of the situation suggested that it was impossible to choose a single one. Like the moral and political crisis of the "Dreyfus affair", the Algerian drama perturbed the consciences and

minds of men searching for an absolute, indubitable truth. And he who was usually referred to as the "most famous of Frenchmen", to whom a great many people instinctively turned their searching eyes, continued to keep silent. Unlike the rest of the politicians, fiercely defending their plans for solving the Algerian problem, General de Gaulle said not a word of it in public. His numerous visitors asked him to present his view to the country, but the General resolutely declined on the grounds that "the moment had not come". They tried to tell him that all the well-meaning people of France, that is to say, the whole of the French bourgeoisie, wanted to know his opinion. Contemptuously, the General replied: "The well-meaning are dastardly. You want me to speak. What would you like me to tell to these narrow-minded bourgeois who have never understood anything, and who would have been hanged in 1944, if de Gaulle had not been there?"

So there was nothing for it but to try to guess the General's thoughts or to study his old statements. At his "farewell" press conference of July 1955 he spoke, rather vaguely and with reservations, of the possibility of "integrating" Algeria and France, thus using the same term that was the slogan of the extremists. However, in private conversations he repeatedly recognised the inevitability of granting independence to Algeria; he believed that Algeria had in fact been lost, and that France could only strive to preserve her economic and political influence in this part of North Africa, after its independence was declared, on the basis of agreements with the sovereign Algerian state. But these were private conversations; they merely provided food for numerous and contradictory rumours about de Gaulle's intentions, and most improbable designs were ascribed to him.

On September 12, 1957 the General's office published the following curious communiqué: "The remarks sometimes attributed in the press to General de Gaulle by some of his visitors, after occasional and fragmentary conversations, are only binding on those who report them. When General de Gaulle believes it useful to inform the public of what he thinks, he does it himself, and publicly, as is well known. This notably applies to the subject of Algeria."

In this atmosphere of puzzlement concerning the General's intentions, he suddenly went to the very epicentre of the drama of which the painful convulsions rent France—to Algeria, to Sahara where immense resources of oil had just been discovered—oil that France needed so badly. Would he say anything definite now? He did not. There were conferences, conversations, but no programmatic declarations. However, the very tone and character of his statements during this trip were extremely interesting in the light of the events that followed. He informed Robert Lacoste, Governor General of Algeria, a Socialist turned a most ardent defender of the

interests of the ultracolonialists: "The Algerian problem cannot be solved without de Gaulle..." On the following day he added: "You know, Lacoste, do not forget that it will take a long time, and that the solution will depend on the whole ensemble." De Gaulle obviously did not want to commit himself to any definite course in the solution of the Algerian problem. Ever a disciple of Bergson, he rejected any preconceived principles and was inclined to take only the concrete circumstances into account. And, of course, now more than ever before he valued silence, of which he had once eloquently wrote that it was "the splendour of the strong and the refuge of the weak, the virtue of the proud and the pride of the humiliated, the prudence of the wise and the reason of the stupid."

The General obviously had nothing against being the focus of hopes of different political trends, often downright hostile to one another. The vagueness, secrecy, and mystery surrounding the General's real intentions were a most important tactical means of preparing a return to power. With icy composure he implemented this tactical plan, which made him the object of universal vague hopes. Indeed, if de Gaulle had worked a miracle in the times of "June 18", why couldn't he perform another one? In any case, it would be better to try to get out of the mess under the guidance of de Gaulle himself than of the Guy Mollets, Bourguès-Maunourys, and Gaillards, who took turns at heading governments that were not trusted by the public at all. An ever greater part of the French people, exhausted by the Algerian war, were inclined to think so.

As a matter of fact, even the most active supporters of de Gaulle's return to power, old Gaullists absolutely loyal to him, had no clear conception of the chief's plans for the Algerian problem. They did not have a common platform for its solution.

The most influential group among the Gaullists was then headed by Jacques Soustelle, for whom the General's return to power held the promise of keeping Algeria French and of integrating it, in the long run. In 1955, when he was Governor General of Algeria, Soustelle became close to the influential leaders of the extremists. He had once enjoyed de Gaulle's complete trust. But the General's attitude to Soustelle became rather distant because of the political intrigues of this former ethnographer towards the end of the R.P.F.'s existence. Nevertheless, Soustelle pinned all his political hopes on de Gaulle.

Another Gaullist group, represented by the young and vigorous politician from Bordeaux, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, saw the handing over of power to de Gaulle as their main task. They regarded the Algerian war as suitable pretext for liquidating the Fourth Republic and establishing a new regime in the spirit of de Gaulle's well-known ideas. As for the solution of the Algerian problem, they believed that the General's genius would find the best way out.

Finally, the third and rather weak Gaullist group consisted of men who saw the senselessness and danger of continuing the war and of the hopes for keeping Algeria in colonial dependence on France. A typical representative of this group was Edmond Michelet, who believed that only the General's prestige could induce the country to agree to grant Algeria independence. Many advocates of de Gaulle's return to power, such as André Malraux or François Mauriac, were openly indignant about the continuing war and in particular about its barbaric methods.

But no Gaullist, whatever his views might be on the Algerian question, could say with certainty that it was he who expressed the General's views. Besides, de Gaulle would never permit anything of the sort. In general, he did not think it necessary to let even the closest associates into his secret thinking on such a complex and delicate issue. He merely permitted them to act as his followers, and they were content with that, for they were mere nothings, politically, without de Gaulle. Only in the General's giant shadow could they have any sort of political future. In fact, the relations between de Gaulle and his colleagues did not at all resemble the usual relationships between the leader of a political party and his 'inner circle'. As a rule, such a leader depends to some extent on the associates, and he must carefully take into account the demands of his political allies. De Gaulle's line of conduct was quite different. He expected unqualified personal loyalty of his followers, and was not interested in their opinions. De Gaulle's isolated position was in this sense exceptional, reflecting his desire to act as the nation's leader standing above all parties, rather than as a political party's leader. The sad experience of the R.P.F. had taught the General a great deal, including distrust towards his servile entourage. He had seen a great many betrayals and renunciations, which merely served to increase his contempt for very many individuals, particularly those who had made protestations of undying loyalty. It was for this reason that in the last years of the Fourth Republic he sometimes unexpectedly confessed that he felt easier in his mind about his old enemies than about his friends. In discussing his political prospects, he once remarked: "A return to power? De Gaulle, yes, but without the Gaullists."

Many of these certainly had an inkling of that attitude. But some of them were loyal to the General, without fear or reproach, and were ready to follow him in any direction he should choose. Others were only concerned about a personal political career in the future. But there were still others who hoped to exert pressure on de Gaulle, particularly on the Algerian issue, in the event of his assumption of power. "I know," said Michel Debré, "that Soustelle and I are not in absolute agreement with the General on Algerian policy. But the most urgent task is to put an end to this regime

which leads France to ruin. Later, I hope that we shall convince the General of the necessity of integration."

In the meantime they did everything possible to prepare de Gaulle's return to power, the more so that the situation was becoming more favourable for that. During its uncommonly long existence, Guy Mollet's government committed all sorts of conceivable and inconceivable follies, which inevitably pushed the Fourth Republic towards destruction. The Socialist leader seemed to be bent on precisely such an outcome. As early as November 30, 1956, de Gaulle told Jean Tournoux: "I have no more chances of returning to power..., unless these imbeciles continue to practice an idiotic policy." But they did continue that policy, and de Gaulle's chances increased. However, Guy Mollet's too long sojourn at the Hôtel Matignon ran counter to the plans of de Gaulle's supporters, and that was why Jacques Soustelle did a great deal to bring about the fall of Guy Mollet's cabinet in May 1957.

The Gaullists now openly began to pursue their goal with great resolution. During the new crisis, the National Council of the Social Republicans (*le Conseil national des Républicains sociaux*) demanded that the deputies "should immediately promote, in the face of an imminent catastrophe, a government of public salvation that would reunite the men of all political tendencies, chosen for their competence in parliament or even outside it, under the presidency of a personality whose prestige and authority are recognised by all Frenchmen".

That was an obvious reference to de Gaulle. But his hour had not yet struck. So far, it was only the mood that was in favour of de Gaulle but not the balance of forces. On June 12, after the usual scuffles over the portfolios and various other deals, the government of the Rightist Radical Bourguès-Maunoury was formed. Unlike Guy Mollet's government, which had a "Socialist" colouring, this was a fully Rightist, reactionary and dull cabinet. In all aspects, its policy continued and deepened the vicious, weak, and vacillating course of the previous government. Bourguès-Maunoury held on to power for only two and a half months, of which one and a half fell on the National Assembly's vacation. But already on September 30 the cabinet was overthrown, with some help from Jacques Soustelle, and a new, 18th government crisis in the history of the Fourth Republic began. It lasted 35 days and turned out to be difficult and tense as never before. That was soon after the launching of the first Soviet satellite, and all the papers published a certain deputy's apt remark: "It will soon be easier to go to the Moon than to form a government."

During the frantic search for a candidate for the office of the Prime Minister, his residence, the Hôtel Matignon, was lit by wax candles. The whole Paris was in darkness, underground and suburban

electric trains were not running. The country was paralysed not only by an administrative crisis but also by gigantic strikes. In 1956, 982,000 workers had taken part in the strikes, while in 1957 the figure rose to 2,964,000. Industrial unrest reached its peak in October, at the time of the government crisis. This was a reminder to everybody that, however important the Algerian problem might be, bitter class struggle remained an immutable factor of French life, and that the social problems insistently demanded a solution. All political leaders had to take that fact into account, in one way or another.

What was then the position of de Gaulle, who could not of course fail to notice such a major phenomenon in the country's life as the mass strike movement in late 1957? Despite certain family connections, de Gaulle never regarded himself as a bourgeois. Indeed, he was not a banker or owner of some industrial enterprise, and he never had any shares in any firm. His only possession was a comparatively small, purely private estate. Nevertheless, his positions, prompted, as he sincerely believed, only by his concern about France's greatness, and not about the advantages of certain capitalist groups, were precisely in keeping with their interests. He was deeply convinced that the life of every Frenchman only had meaning if it was subordinated to his preoccupation with strengthening France's position in the world. He simply could not understand that anyone might worry about "petty" everyday things.

"The French no longer have any ambition," he said to one of his visitors. "They think of their living standard, which is not, as such, a national ambition. At the same time, there are countries which, thinking less of their living standards, will conquer the world. They will even conquer the world without fighting..." At about the same time, in another conversation, the General said: "Me, I am not like those technocrats who claim, 'France, we do not know it. We only know the French, that is, 45 millions of consumers...' " In connection with the question of living standards, he added, "That is important for the French. But France?"

Paraphrasing the well-known dictum, one may say that de Gaulle adhered to the principle "Greatness before Butter". This position could not, of course, increase his popularity. It was just as well that de Gaulle did not express these views in public but only in the narrow circle of his associates. But sooner or later they would drastically affect his political destiny.

In the meantime the government crisis continued. First Guy Mollet, then Pleven, Pinay, Schuman, again Guy Mollet, tried to form a new cabinet. Only the fear inspired by the immense strike movement compelled the representatives of all the principal non-Communist parties to stifle their differences and contradictions and form a government including members of nine parties headed by

Felix Gaillard, a Right Radical, a close associate of René Mayer and Jean Monnet, often called the ward of the Rothschild house. At 38, he was the youngest of all the postwar Premiers, but he headed a coalition in a very old style. On such basic issues as Algeria and the economy, Gaillard took an even more conservative and at the same time adventurist line than his predecessors. Under Gaillard, the prestige of the Fourth Republic fell to an all-time low. He merely added new causes for universal discontent to the old ones, particularly in foreign affairs.

The Anglo-Saxon nations had slighted France even before, but now they began to treat it quite openly as a second-rate power. The United States exploited the aggravation of the relations between France and the Arab peoples over the war in Algeria to consolidate their own positions in North Africa and the Middle East. In November 1957, a conflict broke out over arms deliveries to Tunisia by the U.S.A. and Great Britain. The French extremists raised hue and cry about those arms finding their way to Algeria, and about Tunisia, France's former colony, coming under American control. Gaillard tried to make the U.S.A. and Great Britain give up their interference in the French sphere of interests, but to no avail. Moreover, France's catastrophic financial situation compelled him to obey US dictates. At the end of 1957, he was endeavouring to get US credits to the tune of \$650 million. In return, he had to consent to American rocket bases being built on French territory.

But the disasters in foreign policy brought about by Gaillard's government were only beginning. The main events occurred after February 8, 1958. On that day, French war planes made an atrocious attack on the Tunisian village Sakhiet-Sidi-Youssef on the Algerian border. The raid was in retaliation for the defeat suffered by a French unit at the hands of the Algerians not far away. In revenge, the French command decided to destroy the Tunisian village where the Algerians had allegedly taken cover. 75 innocent Tunisians, including 21 children, died in the bombing and strafing. It turned out that there were no Algerians in the village at all. The whole world was indignant at the monstrous crime. Tunisia broke off diplomatic relations with France and appealed to the Security Council of the United Nations. At this moment, the Americans with their well-known "magnanimity" appeared on the scene. Together with the British, they offered their "good offices" in regulating the Franco-Tunisian conflict. That mission was entrusted to Robert Murphy, mentioned above in connection with the events in Algeria in 1943. It is easy to visualise the response of the French colonialists to the activities of the "good offices" mission, which was interpreted as a form of direct interference of the U.S.A. in France's affairs. De Gaulle's supporters were quick to use the crisis to their advantage. One of the Gaullist leaders, Michel Debré, wrote in his paper

Courrier de la Colère that Gaillard promoted the American plans for the internationalisation of the Algerian issue, and that a scheme had already been worked out for establishing a "N.A.T.O. protectorate over Algeria".

On April 15, the National Assembly interrupted vacation to discuss the policy of Gaillard's government. Algeria, Tunisia, and in particular the "good offices", provided abundant materials for recriminations. As usual, the attack on the government was spear-headed by Jacques Soustelle. By that time he had already concluded an alliance with Roger Duchet, leader of the Independents, Georges Bidault, honorary chairman of the M.R.P., and André Morice, the Right Radical. All of them wanted to seize power to continue the fight, at any cost, for keeping Algeria French. And Soustelle had yet another goal—returning de Gaulle to power. He made a harshly accusing speech in the Assembly against Gaillard's policy. Soustelle insisted that the "good offices" mission was merely a preparation for complete liquidation of all the French positions in North Africa. He declared that American oil trusts were active behind the scenes, trying to lay their hands on the Saharan oil. "I am one of those who have decided not to make any more concessions," declared Soustelle in thunderous tones. "France has reached the ultimate limit in making concessions. She must henceforth say no to humiliations and abandonment." The debate ended in the downfall of the Gaillard cabinet. That was, in fact, the last government of the Fourth Republic. A train of events then began that went down in history as the "operation of resurrecting de Gaulle".

The General had grown accustomed to take the numerous government crises rather calmly. He merely gave vent to his usual sarcasms about the succession of "puppets" and "clowns" in the "galanty show"—the government and parliament. But he took the news of the fall of Felix Gaillard's cabinet in quite a different way, as the beginning of the final decline of the Fourth Republic. At last de Gaulle saw the political traffic lights change to green, opening the road to power for him.

But wasn't the General again a captive of illusions, as had happened to him in the R.P.F. times? Indeed, according to the polls, only 13 out of 100 Frenchmen were in favour of a de Gaulle government at the beginning of 1958. The General knew that his active supporters' influence was infinitesimal. The "Social Republicans" won only 3.5 per cent of the votes at the cantonal elections in April 1958. And did not de Gaulle himself make very pessimistic predictions in early 1958? When his imminent return to power was forecast, he replied: "That is a Utopia: I have no legal means of returning to power. 'They' [the parties] will never accept a departure from the republican legality." The General realised that the prevailing political tendency was towards the Left. This had been demonstrated by the 1956 elections and emphasised by the subsequent events. And that was, indeed, the objective evolution of the political situation.

Despite these facts, de Gaulle was confident in April 1958 that his hour was near. He did not recognise historical determinism, believing that man can alter the course of seemingly inevitable events. As early as 1921, Captain de Gaulle asserted: "There is no historical fatality, except for cowards." He was at that time Assistant Professor of History at Saint-Cyr, and in one of his lectures he said: "Chance and audacity have changed the course of events. Remember this lesson: history does not teach fatalism. These are hours when the will of several men breaks determinism and opens new paths. When you deplore the bad present and fear the worst, you will be told: 'These are the laws of History. Evolution wants it so.' This will be scientifically explained to you. Messieurs, correct this scholarly timidity. It is more than stupidity, it is a sin against reason."

No, he would not commit a sin against reason; if he ran into obstacles, he would not give up action. Carefully and shrewdly, he considered all the circumstances and acted vigorously, finding unexpected but real possibilities. Politics is the art of the possible, and de Gaulle had complete mastery of it, particularly in critical and even catastrophic situations. It was not for nothing that he was often referred to as the "man of crises". In connection with the events of May 13, 1958, Jean-Raymond Tournoux called de Gaulle the "Napoleon of internal politics". In the present case, however, the frequent comparison of de Gaulle and Napoleon is particularly tenuous.

Even more doubtful is the concrete analogy between Napoleon's 18 Brumaire and de Gaulle's May 13. The historical conditions and circumstances are too different, not to mention the immense difference in the purely human qualities of the two heroes of French history. The 18th Brumaire looks a very simple operation as compared with the much more complicated and lengthy process of de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. De Gaulle's activity during the several critical weeks was a masterpiece of political strategy and tactics. In the whole of his career de Gaulle had not demonstrated so clearly his qualities as a politician and man of action. He showed subtle psychological intuition, extraordinary self-control, understanding of the situation and the men, ability to stake everything at once at the proper moment and, most importantly, ability to draw support from heterogeneous and often contradictory forces and trends. It goes without saying that the author of *The Edge of the Sword* exercised all those inalienable qualities of the man of action which he had once frankly and eloquently described: cunning, secretiveness, and insidiousness. He now acted in the sphere of "high politics" where there is no morality but only the goal and success or failure, where any means were good.

Besides, reappearing on the political scene in 1958, the General was no longer that implacable, haughty, and harsh man of the war times who had indulged in fierce arguments with no less a man than Churchill; he was no longer the uncompromising embodiment of contempt for everyone and everything as in January 1946, when he had retired from power, angrily banging the door. In those days of 1958, he nervously paced his office in the Rue Saint-Dominique with long strides and, suddenly stopping, raised his hands to heaven and exclaimed: "After all, the French probably need a period of abominations!"

He still had his difficult temper of course, but it had become considerably attenuated. The failures had taught him a few things. After his meeting with de Gaulle in the summer of 1958, Harold Macmillan, who had often had to deal with the General in the war years, told a French minister: "I have found de Gaulle changed and

very affable. He follows the same process as Churchill, who was impossible during the war!"

Jean-Raymond Tournoux, who observed de Gaulle closely and frequently in those critical weeks, writes in his book *The Secret Political Notebooks (Carnets secrets de la politique)*: "Indeed, de Gaulle had changed. Very little physically. The temples have become slightly white, the voice slightly muted, the jacket or tunic offer a considerably more rounded profile. Nothing out of the ordinary. What is more surprising is the the new style of human contacts, a more striking one, the playfulness that can make itself felt, and the more seducing charm which does not hesitate to manifest itself. Drawing the line at opportunism, of course, de Gaulle no longer disdains at all making sacrifices to opportunity."

This last sentence contains a key to de Gaulle's tactics in May 1958, when he did not, indeed, disdain anything, using any cards that promised success. That was no longer the innocuous patience playing of the times of "crossing the desert"; he was now staking his all. Let us look at his cards.

The General's chief trump was the intercession of the French army. Although already in his first book, *Discord among the Enemy*, de Gaulle had condemned the army's attempts to exert pressure on the state, he now pinned all his hopes on precisely this kind of pressure—as fate would have it. The state of the army completely justified those hopes. Already in the times when de Gaulle was merely beginning his military career, the army had been the refuge of all the anti-Republican forces, while now it became even more reactionary. The country was leaning towards the Left, while the army moved in the opposite direction. Its constant muted opposition to the Republican regime concealed rebellious intentions. The officers and generals had long accused the governments of the Fourth Republic, parliament and the parties, of being responsible for their endless defeats in the colonies. The reverses in Algeria aggravated this mood. Algeria, where more than a half of the French army was stationed, became a hotbed of mutiny. Already at the beginning of 1957, the first unsuccessful attempt at a military coup was made there. General Faure decided to arrest Lacoste, Minister Resident in Algeria, and his top officials, and induce General Salan, commanding in Algeria, to head the rebellion, extending it later to the territory of Metropolitan France. The plot was accidentally discovered. But that did not discourage the conspirators, the more so that Faure got off with the ridiculous punishment of 30 days arrest.

In January 1957, the "bazooka incident" occurred. On January 16, several bazooka shells were fired at the windows of Salan's office. The General himself was not in the office, but his aide was killed. It came to light that the conspirators wanted to put Salan

out of the way because of his "indecision" in defending "French Algeria". Again the culprits were not punished.

In the meantime, the press continued to supply information about their activities. It was reported that the striking force would be General Massu's paratroops notorious for their atrocities in the war with the Algerians. Dozens of highly placed military and civilian officials were named who openly prepared a mutiny and were in no way checked by the government. After the bombing of Sakhiet-Sidi Youssef and the resignation of Gaillard's government, it became clear that an army rebellion might break out any moment now.

The sources of another mutinous trend were among the European population of Algeria. It was inspired by out-and-out chauvinists and racists, the magnates of Algerian economy, such as Henri Borgeaud, Alain de Sérigny, Schiaffino and others like them. They financed many organisations that advocated keeping Algeria French at any cost. These extremists, called the "black feet", dreamed of replacing the Fourth Republic by a strong power that would be able, they hoped, to keep Algeria and the other colonies.

Finally, in Metropolitan France there were also small organisations of the fascist variety, whose total strength was about 40,000. They made quite a lot of noise, setting off all kinds of provocations from time to time. Thus, in February 1958, there was an explosion in one of the toilets of the Palais-Bourbon. Veterans' organisations were the most important of these extreme anti-Republican forces.

These were the three principal trends among the rebels, divided into a great number of rival groups and united only by blind colonialist attitudes and hatred for the Republican democracy and the forces of the Left. They did not have a common programme of action or one recognised leader. And, what was most important, they lacked the support of the masses. In this, the French anti-Republican movement of 1958 differed from the former Fascist movements in Italy and Germany headed by Mussolini and Hitler, while in all the other respects they showed close affinity.

This alone made the use of the extremists by de Gaulle very difficult. Of course, they also hated the Fourth Republic system. But, apart from the gravitation toward authoritarian power, what did the *Connétable* have in common with the semi-criminal extremist elements? There was a great deal that made their *rapprochement* difficult. Most of this fascist crowd were in general against de Gaulle's coming to power. They did not trust him because of the past. They could not forgive him his cooperation with the Communists during and after the war, his fight against Vichy and fascism, the progressive reforms conducted in 1944-1946. They believed him to be too far to the Left, because during the war he had cooperated much more successfully with the U.S.S.R. than with the U.S.A. or

Great Britain. The main thing was, though, that de Gaulle never supported the colonialist extremists' slogans in public. His realistic statements in private became known, in one way or another, to the conspirators and filled them with apprehensions.

As for military sections of the extremists, that is, the anti-Republican top brass capable of lending the conspiracy real punch in the mass, they were not pro-Gaullist either. Since old times, the officer cadre of the French army fell into two parts: colonial officers and those of the homeland. The former pursued their career in the colonies, the latter saw the meaning of their existence in defending the territory of France itself. There were serious differences in the activities, mode of life and thinking of the two groups. General de Gaulle, since his graduation from Saint-Cyr, was a distinctly "Metropolitan" officer. His concern had always been with defending the frontiers of France, with problems of waging a modern large-scale war against a strong enemy—against Germany, to be precise. Colonial affairs were almost completely left out in his military works. His short service in Syria and Lebanon had not changed de Gaulle's profound conviction that the French army was intended in the first place for the defence of Metropolitan France. It is true that during the war he fiercely fought the British and the Americans to preserve the empire, but he regarded it only as a territorial basis for restoring the independence of France itself. De Gaulle's military and political outlook differed sharply from that of the colonial officers who believed that the loss of colonies made their very existence meaningless. De Gaulle rejected these ultracolonialist positions. He had very few ideological allies among the top military. In their turn, the latter did not trust de Gaulle, for he extended no assurances that would enable them to count on him as an advocate of the extremists' aspirations.

They would have rallied round him, of course, had he propounded a programme in keeping with these aspirations. They had not a single authoritative leader to rival de Gaulle's enormous influence. The numerous candidates for dictatorship, like Generals Charrier or Chassin, or the civilian "leaders" like Martel, Poujade, Lefebvre, were complete nonentities compared to de Gaulle.

The General himself had nothing but deep contempt for this gang of fascist bawlers. And he had very good grounds for taking care not to become the extremists' leader. This would inevitably have injured de Gaulle's prestige even more than the R.P.F. episode, and would have brought him no closer to power, for a real threat of fascism might make all the Republicans unite against the extreme Right. Early in 1958, de Gaulle said to Senator Debu-Bridel: "In case of catastrophe, they will revive the Popular Front, including the M.R.P., in the name of the defence of the Republic." The adventurism and blind colonialism of the extremists frightened even

most of the bourgeoisie. In parliament, they were openly supported only by the Poujadist group and the extreme adherents of "French Algeria" from the Right-wing parties like Duchen, Morice, or Bidault. The course of the government crisis after Gaillard's resignation confirmed this. At first, Bidault tried to set up a "national unity" government that would include Soustelle and Morice. But Bidault was not supported even by his own party, the M.R.P. The next candidate for premiership, Plevin, also wanted to form a government of the same ultracolonialist type, slightly toned down. But Plevin failed to get the support of the Socialists, and on May 5 he gave up the attempt. Thus parliament refused to support the extremists' intention of endlessly dragging out the Algerian war or even expanding it.

The minds of the bourgeois politicians were astir with new ideas engendered by the major political and economic changes in the world. The inevitability of the downfall of the colonial system and the absurdity of the attempts to keep Algeria dominated by France were becoming increasingly obvious. The need for some compromise in Algeria became especially apparent, for French capital now faced new tasks which could not be solved without getting rid of the pernicious economic and political consequences of the war. The coming establishment of the Common Market demanded a mobilisation of all the possibilities for self-defence against the unprecedented pressure of foreign economic competition. The financial system, completely unsettled by the inflation caused by the endless colonial wars, had to be put in order, and economic measures for strengthening the competitiveness of French industry had to be implemented. To solve these tasks, big business now persistently worked towards a radical reform of the state system. In the spring of 1958, a reform of the constitution was under discussion. Parliamentary democracy in the form of the Fourth Republic no longer suited big business. But the Algerian problem confused everything. How was one to get out of the Algerian cul-de-sac? Compromise was made difficult by the fierce resistance of the extremists. On the other hand, their triumph and open fascism frightened the bourgeoisie, not so much in themselves but because of the danger of the revival of the Popular Front, whose basis would inevitably be the Communist Party, the largest in the country. Under these conditions, the third path seemed more preferable—handing over power to de Gaulle. This choice even seemed inevitable. In April, a significant article by Professor Maurice Duverger appeared in *Le Monde*, which reflected this mood. Professor Duverger wrote that the question was not whether de Gaulle would return to power but at what date and under what conditions.

It was not by chance that Duverger entitled his article "When?" Indeed, the situation still seemed very equivocal. Even the obvious

inclination of big business towards establishing a strong power did not signify its unqualified support for the General: his methods did not inspire confidence.

To overcome these doubts, strong measures were needed. The shock could naturally be supplied by a militarycolonialist mutiny in Algeria. But the point was that many military and civilian extremists preparing the rebellion did not, as has been said, favour the handing over of power to de Gaulle. It therefore became the most important goal of the Gaullists to swing the extremists' movement in favour of the General. The history of May 13 was in the first place the history of various trends joining the enterprise prepared by the Gaullists.

It was especially important to enlist the support of the army. Apart from the old links, new opportunities opened up in 1957 when the post of War Minister in Felix Gaillard's government was taken up by Jacques Chaban-Delmas, de Gaulle's old and loyal follower. His position enabled him to contact the men he needed, to establish connections with them, and to directly supervise the preparations for a military rebellion. In December 1957, Chaban-Delmas summoned retired Major Léon Delbecque, a war-time Gaullist and R.P.F. activist. He consented to put on the uniform again and to go to Algeria for a year on a special mission of setting up Gaullist headquarters code-named Aerial. Delbecque took up residence in a modest four-room villa with a long staircase leading up to it. The Aerial began operating effectively early in 1958. Supporters were recruited in the military and civil circles. Very soon Delbecque made contacts with prominent military officials, trying to win them over to de Gaulle's side. He soon established connections with the civilian extremists of Algeria as well. Gaullists were also active in the Metropolitan army. Links were established with the command of seven out of eight military districts. Prominent officials from the headquarters of the French occupation forces in West Germany also promised their support.

As for the secret organisations among the European population in Algeria, the most important role in attracting them to de Gaulle's side was played by Jacques Soustelle. As early as 1955, when Soustelle was Governor General of Algeria, he was closely associated with the leaders of the Algerian extremists. In France, he created the Union for the Salvation and Renovation of French Algeria (*l'Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie française*), and later established a branch of this union in Algeria. Jacques Soustelle's talks with Alain Séigny, a major planter and shipowner, are a good illustration of the way the Gaullists enlisted the extremists' support for their cause. On March 15, 1958, Séigny and Soustelle met in Nice, at the Ruhl. "Your party and you yourself clamour for General de Gaulle's return to power..." said Séigny. "But do you

know that General de Gaulle has the same views as we do on the Algerian problem and the future of this province?" Soustelle promised to see the General in the next few days and to ask for explanations. On March 28, Séigny received Soustelle's letter setting forth de Gaulle's views. As an illustration of de Gaulle's tactics, it is a very curious document: he touched on everything but promised nothing concrete. The letter said: "Besides, he believes himself to be cut off from real action, and it is for this reason that he does not want to speak. 'What is the use of talking, he says, without acting?'"

But Séigny was satisfied by that vague reply, and the organisations that were under his influence swung in favour of de Gaulle's return to power. The situation was much more serious, however, in the case of some other Algerian extremist organisations which had their suspicions about de Gaulle. In any case, both in the army and among the Algerian supporters of "French Algeria" the vigorous activities of the not too numerous Gaullists and the aggravation of all of France's domestic and external problems brought about a certain shift in the General's favour by May 1958.

The tactics of de Gaulle himself remained most complicated and mysterious. He did not tell even his loyal followers anything definite about his intentions. It was only in the last days of April that he told some of them that he would positively react to an appeal from "the army and the people" to return to power. But even on those occasions he remained reserved, preferring to listen to his interlocutors. One might get the impression from these dialogues as if power was being thrust on him while he expressed scepticism, distrust, doubts, listening to refutations of his apprehensions. Here is the substance of his conversation with Léon Delbecque in those days:

"My General, I have come from Algeria, and I want to tell you that the situation becomes aggravated. Algeria lives in a state of permanent conspiracy. Everyone is agitated... And we Gaullists, are we going to remain passive? And then, the army is astir—"

"You mean, certain elements of the army..."

"No, my General, the whole army is restless... A great many military clamour for your return to power."

"The army does not like me... Does it take a large part in the actions of which you tell me?"

"Not the whole army, but certain military chiefs."

"In any case, the French in Algeria, they will never have trust in de Gaulle!"

.....

"My General, if the events should make it necessary to appeal to your arbitration, would you decide to abandon your retirement and your silence? If, in consequence of grave circumstances, the army and the people should appeal to you, would you say yes?"

"Delbecque, I have always had the habit of assuming my responsibilities."

The rather ambiguous alliance between de Gaulle and the Algerian extremists was becoming ever closer. It is of interest that, while he was so reticent about his intentions with loyal Gaullists, he displayed unusual frankness with their opponents. Two months before May 13, he had a significant conversation with André Philip, his former colleague in London, later his minister, and at that time a prominent Socialist leader. The position of this party would be of key significance in the coming events. The Socialists opposed the extremists, and most of them did not want de Gaulle to return to power. If the Socialists had given up the policy of splitting the working class, if they had acted together with the Communists, the history of France and de Gaulle's life would have obviously been different. That was why the General received Philip with extreme courtesy and said the most interesting things to him. When the Socialist leader expressed concern about the alarming developments in Algeria, de Gaulle said: "One can only extricate oneself [out of the crisis] through Algeria's independence, stage by stage, if possible in association with France."

"Yes, but I am uneasy. An army revolt is in preparation there, under the patronage of your name, in favour of French Algeria. Given what you have just told me, you cannot but prevent them from using your name."

"If the army is restless [said the General], either there is a government in Paris, or there is no government. If there is a government, it will govern, and the army will obey. The army does not revolt unless its natural instinct for obedience is frustrated. If there is no government, the army will seize power in Algeria. And I, ascertaining that there is no more State, I shall seize power in Paris, to save the Republic."

"But then you will never be able to declare the independence of Algeria. You will be a hostage!"

"Now Philip, don't be naive. You have lived in Algeria just as I have. You know them. They are all bawlers. There is nothing for it than let them bawl! As for the military, I shall quietly wait until the chiefs swallow one another. And I shall do what I please with those that remain through promotions and decorations."

These views, very interesting in the light of subsequent events, de Gaulle expressed in conversations with his visitors of the Left. He spoke quite differently to the messengers from the other camp. One had to have a very good memory indeed not to get confused. On April 30, for instance, he received Soustelle and on the same day he talked to Emmanuel d'Astier. "Whom do you tell the truth,

my General?" exclaimed his guest. "Soustelle or me?" The General let the future answer that question.

In the beginning of May, 1958, the events started rolling at a headlong pace: the agony of the Fourth Republic began, and it lasted a whole month. Many thick books, which read like detective novels, have been written and published in France about those times. Their authors have tried to make head or tail of the events that sometimes came rolling like an avalanche. They endeavour to discover some system or a single direction in the not too meaningful combination of countless personalities and organisations, their actions and counteractions, in the intricate interweaving of interests and illusions, of conscious intentions and instinctive urges, in the chaos and confusion, in the turbulent stream of misinformation and downright lies. This digging in the anthep of French political life mostly yields no clear results, as they leave out of account the overriding fact that underlying the "May 13 revolution" were major socio-economic phenomena, that it was a phase in the ongoing class struggle. The working people were not inclined to defend the Fourth Republic, while the capitalists used that fact to establish new forms of their domination. But this principal line of development was complicated by a unique factor, by something that does not occur all that often in history—an exceptional personality possessing exceptional qualities.

De Gaulle's immense figure, with his irresistible appeal to the masses and the halo of legendary glory, overshadowed everything else. Using the confusion and the crisis produced by the war in Algeria, he directed the events towards establishing his personal power. And the bourgeoisie, frightened by the ghost of the Popular Front, overcoming its doubts and feeling lost in the political turmoil, preferred to hand over the responsibility for the country's destiny to de Gaulle. In any case, his presence guaranteed the main thing that the bourgeoisie was concerned about—social stability. During the events of May 1958, General de Gaulle fussed probably less than anyone else, although he was sensitive as no one to the beating of the country's pulse and the political temperature. Let us outline in brief his actions that opened up a new period in his extraordinary political career.

The signal and pretext for direct action by Algerian rebels were reports about the impossibility of forming a government that would undertake the implementation of the extremists' programme, and the rumours that parliament was moving towards forming a cabinet inclined to begin negotiations aimed at ending the war or, as the extremist leaders put it, at giving up Algeria. Even Plevin worried them as a possible candidate, for he was alleged to be secretly in favour of negotiations with the Algerian insurgents. On April 26, a demonstration was held of several thousands of the adherents of the

"French Algeria" policy (in the organisation of which Delbecque had a hand). Pierre Lagailarde, head of the fascist youth organisation, declared in his speech before the demonstrators: "But if parliament does not want to understand, we shall go to the limit!"

During the next week no major events apparently took place. But that impression was deceptive. Cars scurried all over Paris, between the Elysée, the Hôtel Matignon and the Palais-Bourbon. Strenuous negotiations continued about the composition of Pleven's government.

In Algeria, committees and groupings held conferences, argued and invented plans. There was also great agitation among the army command in Algeria. The generals and officers involved in the conspiracy awaited news from Paris and discussed their future tactics, and certain operations, with quite definite objectives, were already in progress.

Squadrons of transport planes intended for carrying paratroops were moved from France to Algeria.

General de Gaulle continued to keep silence and changed nothing in his routine occupations. But his secretariat in the Rue Solferino in Paris was alert. Jacques Foccart, Colonel Bonneval and Olivier Guichard kept up uninterrupted communication with the General, informing him of all new developments. There was a kind of regular commuting by car between Paris and Colombey. On April 29, the General received Lucien Neuwirth, an officer in the paratroops and Delbecque's right hand. In reply to Neuwirth's question what de Gaulle would do in the event of army action in Algeria, the General stated: "I shall answer you." Outwardly, everything was quiet in de Gaulle's immediate environment. Olivier Guichard later recalled: "We feared playing the role of a General Staff like the plague. The General did not want that."

On May 4 it came to light that Pleven encountered new difficulties in forming his cabinet. And, although the wrangling over ministerial portfolios still continued, the President of the Republic René Coty instructed his military secretary General Ganeval to meet de Gaulle's collaborators and to find out, through them, the conditions of his return to power. De Gaulle's men soon replied that the General believed the usual procedure of forming the government to be completely unacceptable to him. He was not going to pay obligatory visits to the President, to the chairmen of the two chambers of parliament, and demanded an extraordinary procedure in which there would be no discussion of the future government or its policy by parliament. General de Gaulle was not going, of course, to be present in person at the debates in the Palais-Bourbon. This reply was not a mere display of dislike for parliament; the General wanted to play at delaying tactics, waiting for events that would compel the deputies to vote for de Gaulle without fail.

Those events were drawing nearer. After Pleven's failure, the President instructed Pierre Pflimlin, leader of the M.R.P., to form a new government. The latter suggested a fully Rightist programme corresponding to the new aspirations of big business: drastic consolidation of executive power and extreme measures in the economy, in the internal politics, and a certain inclination towards compromise in Algeria. He even admitted the possibility of peace negotiations. That produced an outburst of rage amongst the defenders of "French Algeria".

Alain de Sérigny, after negotiations with Soustelle and Delbecque, immediately appealed to Governor General Lacoste, a supporter of the extremists, suggesting that he should refuse to leave Algeria until a government of "public safety" was formed in Paris. Sérigny promised Lacoste that these acts would be publicly approved of by de Gaulle. At first Lacoste agreed, but then secretly left Algeria, though before his departure he asked to pass word to the conspirators that they should act as vigorously as possible.

The news of the formation of Pflimlin's government incited the clique of Algerian generals to immediate action. On the night of May 9/10, the President received an ultimatum from Generals Salan, Allard, Jouhaud and Massu, which said: "The present crisis shows that the political parties are profoundly divided on the Algerian issue. The press makes one think that the abandonment of Algeria would be envisaged through a diplomatic process that would begin by negotiation with a view to a cease-fire... The French army unanimously feels the abandonment of this national heritage to be an outrage. Its desperate reaction cannot be predicted."

This telegram did not merely mean the emergence of the army on the political scene and an attempt to exert pressure on the state—it was an open threat of an armed rebellion. Let us note, however, that General de Gaulle's name was not mentioned in it.

The principal events began on May 13. On this day, a general strike and a demonstration were to be held in Algiers at the instigation of the Algerian Vigilance Committee (*le Comité de Vigilance*) representing 17 organisations of fascist colonialists. On the same day in Paris, the deputies gathered in parliament to discuss the question of confirming Pflimlin's powers to form a government. The programme of the new candidate for premiership met with trenchant opposition both on the Right and on the Left. Preliminary calculations showed that it would be blackballed by some 20 votes. Behind the scenes, the Gaullists and the extremists took the deputies to work, to attain that goal. At six p.m. the Gaullists and the Parisian extremists organised a demonstration which started from the Arc de Triomphe and headed for the Palais-Bourbon. There were merely a few thousand demonstrators, and they scattered as soon as they ran into a police cordon. The demonstration left

behind hundreds of posters on the walls: "Recall de Gaulle, and France will again become France!" But parliament made no response to these appeals. In case Pflimlin failed, there were unofficial discussions of plans for setting up a government of "national unity", which would include representatives of all the non-Communist parties, "from Guy Mollet to Antoine Pinay". But the situation changed drastically when the deputies were informed that a military fascist revolt had just taken place in Algeria.

And in Algiers, on that beautiful sunny day, all shops and offices were closed in the afternoon. The centre of the city was crowded by extremists, who gathered round the monument to the war dead, in the Boulevard Laferrière. The Generals Salan and Massu also arrived there, to lay the wreaths: the pretext for the demonstration was the execution of three French soldiers by Algerian guerrillas in response to the massacre of several Algerian patriots. Having completed their mission, the generals left, and then Pierre Lagailarde climbed on the pedestal of the monument. This ringleader of an extremist youth organisation, junior lieutenant in the reserve, wore the uniform of a paratrooper. He loudly called on the crowd to seize the Governor General's residence. Several hundreds of "activists" rushed to the Clemenceau Square, usually called the Forum. The Republican security unit which guarded the building quickly retreated, throwing a few tear-gas grenades but without firing a single shot. The attackers tore into the building and began ripping everything to pieces. Files were thrown from the windows into the streets, and the bust of the Republic was broken in the hall. Lagailarde later described the scene: "Everybody yelled, we wanted to express our point of view... For some three quarters of an hour, no one wanted to take the responsibility. I was shouted down by the crowd who regarded me as being responsible for starting the whole act, until General Massu arrived... Massu bawled out the whole crowd. You know the tone he takes..."

Indeed, surrounded by his paratroopers and wearing, as they did, camouflage battle dress and red beret, the General yelled at Lagailarde: "What sort of brothel is this? You, you are masquerading as a soldier!" Lagailarde answered that he wanted to unite the soldiers and the civilians, to set up a Committee of Public Safety and save Algeria. In the meantime, General Salan, the army commander, Delbecque and other military arrived.

Noisy and incoherent talks began about the Committee of Public Safety. The usurpation by the ultracolonialists of the title sanctified by the Great French Revolution seemed an absurd farce.

But the argument between the rebels was of a very serious nature. Lagailarde's thugs that had seized the building, all those fascists, Poujadists, monarchists, Vichyites and other extremists,

had no great sympathy for de Gaulle. The military, such as Salan, wavered, and reliable Gaullists, headed by Delbecque, were few. So who would get the upper hand? For the time being, the "committee" included representatives of all the tendencies. Its chairman became General Massu. Few people knew that this favourite of the Algerian extremists was deep at heart a Gaullist. However, the first telegram sent by Massu to Paris merely contained the demand to form a government of "public salvation". Not a word about de Gaulle! But then the moment came for the Algerian extremists to get a shock. At three in the morning they learnt that Pflimlin had got a vote of confidence! It would thus appear that the whole venture had fallen through, for the rebels' goal was precisely stopping him from coming to power, and opening the way to it for the extremists. The rebels panicked, there were cries of "We are done for! We shall be shot!"

That was a fine chance for the Gaullists to remind the rebels that there was an excellent way out of the situation—invoking General de Gaulle's high authority. He would save the rebels! They pounced on that idea, and at five in the morning a new telegram was sent to Paris, signed by Massu and approved by all the members of the Committee of Public Safety: "The Committee entreats General de Gaulle that he should kindly interrupt his silence and address the country with a view to forming a government of public safety, which alone can save Algeria from abandonment."

But what would the results of this move be and when would they become known? General de Gaulle was silent, and it was completely impossible to comprehend the behaviour of the government. On the one hand, Pflimlin condemned the rebels in parliament: he would not have come to power, if he hadn't. 160 Communist deputies had intended to vote against the new reactionary cabinet, but on hearing of the rebellion, had changed their decision. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party thus defined its position: "All efforts of the government for the defence of the Republic, its institutions and liberties are assured total support of the working class and the people's masses."

But, having condemned the rebels, ordered the discontinuation of communications with Algeria, and arrested about a hundred Right-wing extremists, Pflimlin's government confirmed at the same time General Salan's authority to administer Algeria. "Let us not close the door," said Pflimlin, "by which the generals can return to legality."

In reality, the main thing the government wanted was quite different: it was unwilling to rely on the working class and the Communist Party in opposing fascism. More than anything else, it was afraid of the shadow of the Popular Front.

In Algeria, the 14th of May was a day of confusion. The military declared that they were not rebels and might even liquidate the Committee of Public Safety if it did not obey the military authorities. A conflict arose between the military and civilian extremists. As for an appeal to General de Gaulle, only in one telegram to the government did Salan demand to resort to a national arbiter—without naming him. Moreover, he assured President Coty of his loyalty, and that he would do everything to control the rebellion. Salan was tormented by indecision until May 15, when he had to make a speech to an enormous crowd that had again gathered in the Forum. He made a short speech ending it with the slogan, "Long live French Algeria!", and was moving away from the microphone. But Delbecque, who stood behind his back, suddenly resolutely held the General back and loudly whispered in his ear, "Shout 'Long Live de Gaulle!'" Salan mechanically repeated the appeal, which was carried far by the PA system, and the crowd responded with loud cheers. The General, pale and trembling, stepped down from the balcony. He was still greatly excited when he returned to his headquarters. Seeing the puzzlement of his colleagues, who were dead set against de Gaulle, he muttered, "I did not cry 'Long live de Gaulle!' ...They claim that I did... So what! So much the worse! I accept!"

...As usual on Wednesday, on May 14 General de Gaulle came from Colombey to Paris, stopping at the hotel Lapérouse. However, some of the appointments made for that day were cancelled. Still, the General received three visitors: former minister Georges Bonnet, his publisher Charles Orengo, and a former Free France fighter Pierre Clostermann. De Gaulle was sceptical about his chances of returning to power: the parties would unite against him. Left alone, the General was lost in thought. To what extent was the regime shaken? When should he act? If he acted too early, the danger would arise of his being identified with the rebels. If he left it until too late, the government and the parties might find a way out and he would be bypassed by the events. What the General now needed badly was information. He did not know anything even about Massu's telegram calling him to power. He wanted his aides, Olivier Guichard and Jacques Foccart, to find out, first of all, the answers to two questions: what was the position of the Gaullists in Algeria, and what was the generals' attitude to de Gaulle?

Communication was established with Salan's representative in Paris, and the latter promised to give an answer on the following day. Attempts were made, through Delbecque's messengers, to find out the situation in Algeria, and especially the position of the military. Delbecque himself could not provide any definite information. He merely asked de Gaulle to act as soon as possible, for there was a danger of Salan coming to an understanding with the govern-

ment. De Gaulle spent a long time alone, working on some document. Later he handed it over to his secretaries. On May 14, in the afternoon, the General returned to Colombey. On the following day, May 15, he received fresh information over the telephone: Salan's role, who had just spoken at the meeting, was becoming clearer; the government's complete helplessness and indecision became obvious. On the whole, the situation appeared more favourable than on the day before. The General took a decision. In the afternoon he telephoned his office in the Rue Solférino in Paris and gave instructions to hand over the document he had written the day before to the head of government and the press. On May 15, 1958, about 6 p.m., information agencies and the radio made public the following statement by de Gaulle:

"The degradation of the state inevitably entails the estrangement of the allied peoples, troubles in the army in the field, national dislocation, and loss of independence. For twelve years, France, beset by problems too difficult for the regime of the parties, has been following a disastrous course. ...Not long since, the country, in its very depths, trusted me to take it all the way to its salvation. Today, when it faces trials again, let it be known that I hold myself in readiness to assume the powers of the Republic."

General de Gaulle has left an immense number of various declarations and appeals as a legacy for the historians, but that text is of special significance, above all because it is the most "Gaullist", so to speak. It demonstrates with exceptional clarity the General's style and methods: brevity and secrecy. Without mystery there is no prestige, the General believed, and on May 15 he did not say a single word on the most important subject—Algeria; he did not even use that word. He did not condemn the rebellion, but neither did he take its side, though his declaration saved it from defeat, providing a real political perspective for it. The General still needed the rebellion, to keep the government in fear.

One thing was clear: de Gaulle intended to take power in his hands. He did not propound any concrete programme, offering instead the noble abstraction of the "salvation" of the country. He did not promise anyone anything concrete, and at the same time promised everyone everything. He did not tie his hands by any sort of plan. He had confidence in himself, and the mysterious tone of that confidence itself inspired faith in General de Gaulle. He aimed at emotions rather than reason, relying on the psychology of the crowd's falling under the mysterious charm of the leader rather than on political inclinations. He appeared as destiny itself, as the predestination, for it was de Gaulle, as he reminded his audience, who had once worked the miracle of national salvation.

General de Gaulle did not want to appear as the leader of rebels, preferring a legal path to power. But he did not promise anything to

the politicians, the parties, and parliament, on which everything depended. On the contrary, he again unreservedly condemned their "system". Now, what could such an attitude mean—absence of elementary tactical sense? Or was it accidental? No, the General never left anything to chance. At that moment, what he wanted was to start a dialogue. He knew that the men at the Hôtel Matignon and the Palais-Bourbon, now feverishly seeking for a way out, would always prefer to escape responsibility, so he gave them a chance to extricate themselves out of the tangle: he would take full responsibility himself, alone.

So let the press write disappointedly about the absence of concrete plans; let them accuse him of dictatorial aspirations, let the Algerian extremists be dissatisfied with his silence on the Algerian issue! All the same, they had nothing to oppose to him, de Gaulle. And the alternative was, as he had said, a catastrophe! And let the frightened imagination set to work...

He also fully took into account the fact that the only real alternative was the union of all the Left forces, including the Communists. But he sensed unerringly the panic and fear the bourgeoisie and all its parties, even the Socialists, felt for such a way out. It was not accidental that he had been already approached by President Coty, and it was not for nothing that Guy Mollet had secretly met his true Guichard recently, trying to sound out the General's intentions.

The General's scheme worked. The fish rose to the bait. Already on the following day, the float dipped, for none other than Guy Mollet, who was now Deputy Premier, spoke in the National Assembly and, stressing his "great esteem and great admiration" for the General, asked him to answer three questions: did he recognise Pflimlin's government as the only legal one? did he condemn rebellious "committees of public salvation"? and would he adhere to the constitutional procedure if he was entrusted with forming a government?

General de Gaulle did not answer Guy Mollet's concrete questions, for he was going to speak to the whole country and on subjects of his own choosing. As he appointed a press conference for May 19, he had no doubt but that in the intervening days the government would demonstrate even more clearly its helplessness and indecision, while the rebels would increase their pressure on Paris. That was exactly the case, and in the afternoon of May 19, he appeared at the Palais d'Orsay surrounded by five thousand policemen for the first time since July 1955, facing eight hundred journalists. His speech exuded confidence, benevolence, even courtesy. In general he was in excellent form. No uniform, though—the General wore civilian clothes.

"I am a lonely man," said de Gaulle, "who is not involved in any party or any organisation... I am a man who belongs to nobody and who belongs to everybody."

These words expressed the gist of the General's tactics. In accordance with his immutable line, he claimed to unite the nation rather than split it. In actual fact he relied, as always, on most heterogeneous forces. As for the absence of "links", what about his relations, of many years standing, with Gaullists, such as Delbecque or Soustelle? Besides, he again refused to condemn the rebels, pointing out that the government had set an example, even to the point of investing Salan with official authority: "The government did not denounce it. I, who am not the government, why should I do so?" Indeed, how could he condemn the rebellion as long as it remained his most important instrument, one that he might have to use? During the press conference he knew already that several paratroops officers had already arrived from Algeria to prepare the transference of the operations to Metropolitan France.

In reply to apprehensions concerning his dictatorial designs, the General exclaimed, with superb indignation:

"Do you really believe that at 67 I want to start the career of a dictator?" The argument was effective but not very convincing: history shows that the lust for power often merely grows with age.

He reminded the audience that after the war he had restored the Republic, although he could have imposed his power. He carefully listed the reforms which had been implemented at that time, omitting to mention, of course, that he simply had no other option in those conditions.

But probably the most curious part of the press conference came when the dumbfounded journalists witnessed a sudden transformation of the harsh *Connétable* into a typical parliamentary operator working over the deputies with practised cunning and flattery before an important voting. That happened when he began to scatter compliments to the Socialists. Everybody was aware of the deep contempt in which he held them, but now they had the key to parliament.

He called the Socialist Robert Lacoste, former Governor General of Algeria, his "friend". But de Gaulle displayed the greatest courtesy towards Guy Mollet: "I have the greatest esteem for Guy Mollet. During the war, he fought, risking everything, for France and for freedom. He was my companion-in-arms..." Recalling his first visit to Arras, where Guy Mollet was Mayor, he mentioned that the latter had stood on the balcony of the town hall next to him when he spoke to the populace. The General's usually excellent memory this time let him down: Guy Mollet had not been there on the balcony. However, in such a theatrical context where everything was invented, this funny little error did not look out of place.

Ending the press conference that had lasted nearly an hour, de Gaulle still had not said anything on the most important issue of Algeria. In conclusion he stated: "I have said all I had to say. Now I

am going to return to my village, and I shall keep myself at the disposal of the country."

The speech of May 19 differed greatly from the brief and harsh statement of May 15. He had then whipped cruelly the political jade of the Fourth Republic, while now he was trying to calm the stumbling and worn-out animal with soft words. The General wanted to mollify and cajole the opposition on the Left, the Socialists. So far, he had not succeeded. Guy Mollet was still unable to prevail upon his party, which was not at all disposed to set up de Gaulle in power. But the other, the Right wing of the opposition quickly came over to de Gaulle's side. Antoine Pinay, the leader of the Rightist Independent party, decided to support de Gaulle openly. When Guy Mollet had begged him to enter the government to form a "national union" against the rebels and de Gaulle, but mostly against the Communists, Pinay had answered: "No, M. Guy Mollet... From Paris to Algeria, there exists a common denominator: de Gaulle. The General must be consulted..."

On May 22, Antoine Pinay went to Colombey, after meeting President Coty and Premier Pflimlin: "I shall tell the General everything that is in my heart, even if he should show me the door." But de Gaulle met the guest very courteously and talked to him for nearly two hours. The question of the formalities of handing over power to de Gaulle was discussed. De Gaulle still refused to perform the parliamentary "rites". Pinay sounded the General out on the most important issues of internal and foreign policy. He was particularly worried about the Atlantic alliance. De Gaulle was not against it, but he did not conceal his desire "to put it in order". On all issues, the General endeavoured to dispel Pinay's apprehensions without making any concessions as to his own plans. The leader of the Right-wingers ("the most obtuse in the world", according to Guy Mollet) was fully satisfied.

He thus expressed his impressions: "I did not find a Louis XIV but a very affable man, very human, passionately concerned with the national interest. He is a great man and a great Frenchman." On his return to the capital, he went directly to the Hôtel Matignon and described his talks to Pflimlin: in his view, they should begin the "overture" of introducing de Gaulle to power. In the meantime the General continued negotiations and persuasions, with smiles and compliments all round. On the same day, on May 22, he established contacts with Mendès-France's group of Radicals, who feared de Gaulle even more than the Socialists did.

But wasn't it time to speed up the events a little? De Gaulle threw into action his main reserve force—the mutinous Algerian generals. On May 23 he sent, this time quite openly, an almost official message to Salan, demanding a report on the events. The message was sent through General Lorillot, Army Chief of Staff.

That meant that the government would know everything. But that was precisely what was needed to make Paris surrender to Colombey.

On May 24, the confusion in the government circles turned into panic. On Soustelle's initiative, Algerian rebels seized the island of Corsica. The operation was directed by well-known Gaullists, including de Gaulle's relative on his wife's side, Henri Maillot. Now the rumours about the possible landing of General Massu's paratroops in Paris were based on solid fact. Simultaneously, however, an anti-Gaullist mood grew in parliament, particularly among the Socialists. On May 25, Guy Mollet sent de Gaulle a letter saying that after the events in Corsica his return to power without condemning the rebels would result in the Communists being the only defenders of the Republic and freedom. And that thought terrified him. Then another Socialist leader, Vincent Auriol, also wrote that his party could only support General de Gaulle if he condemned the rebels. De Gaulle replied evasively, confirming his promise to act within legal limits, and insisting that he was in no way implicated in the Algerian rebellion. As for Pflimlin, he still refused to go to Colombey to offer power to de Gaulle, although he had, in fact, reconciled himself to that and was only worried about the formalities of power transfer. Well, the General would help him out of his predicament.

On May 26 Pflimlin was given de Gaulle's letter, indicating that a meeting between them was necessary, that it had to be secret and had to take place in the evening on the same day. If the head of government should refuse to meet him, General de Gaulle reserved the right to inform the country of that circumstance. Several hours later the automobile of the head of government left the Hôtel Matignon, with an escort of motorcyclists; the role of the Premier was played by one of his subordinates. At the same time another, quite inconspicuous car left the garage without any noise for Saint Cloud. By accident or through a streak of fantasy, the meeting took place in one of the buildings of Saint Cloud where some of the dramatic scenes of Napoleon's revolt of the 18th Brumaire had once taken place. True, Napoleon had here 10,000 soldiers whom he sent into action after he had been driven in disgrace from the Council of 500, where no one would listen to his incoherent speech. Bonaparte dispersed the deputies at bayonet point. De Gaulle did not have any soldiers, except for the Algerian paratroops far away. But the main thing was that the times had changed. He therefore had to play a much more subtle game, resorting to fine phrases, persuasion, and ambiguous manoeuvres. Pflimlin asked the General to condemn the Algerian mutiny and the seizure of Corsica before starting negotiations about power. De Gaulle refused to do so. The talks ended to no purpose. On May 27, at five in the morning, de Gaulle returned to Colombey. Six hours later, he began to dictate to his secretaries

in Paris, by telephone, the text of a new statement for the press: "Yesterday I began the regular procedure necessary for the establishment of a Republican government capable of assuring the unity and independence of the country."

It is easy to imagine Pflimlin's amazement when he read those words. The secret meeting was not a "regular procedure" at all. Besides, it had ended in a failure to reach any agreement. Emmanuel d'Astier wrote in this connection that M. Pflimlin "did not have the statute to call the great visionary a liar", the more so that on May 27 the government learnt, through secret channels, that a landing of Algerian paratroops was appointed for that day. Some ministers believed that de Gaulle's fresh statement had averted that threat: in it, he warned that any violation of public order, from whatever quarter, might have grave consequences and that he would not approve of it. De Gaulle had also called on the armed forces in Algeria to obey their commanders, in whom he expressed confidence and with whom he promised to keep up contacts.

The whole of the well-thought-out document created the impression that de Gaulle had averted a civil war, and that no one but him could save France from this misfortune. On the other hand, he indirectly condemned the rebellion, as it were, thus meeting the condition imposed by the leaders of several political parties. Now Pflimlin's government was merely looking for a pretext to resign. To achieve that purpose, on May 27 it introduced for debate in the National Assembly proposals for a constitutional reform, which envisaged a sharp expansion of the executive authority and limitations on the rights of parliament. The government reckoned on the Communists voting against the motion of confidence, since they had condemned the reform; the cabinet would thus resign, clearing the path for de Gaulle. However, having guessed the purpose of the whole game, the Communists decided to vote for the project of the reform.

Jacques Duclos, representing the Communist Party, said in parliament: "We shall not provide an alibi for you! France will know that your text has been accepted while you ran away to make room for the usurper!"

But the government had decided that it was no time to worry about prestige, and was intent on getting rid of the responsibility. Getting an extraordinarily solid majority, it still decided to resign immediately. At the last sitting of the cabinet, Pleven gave this explanation: "Let us face the facts: we are a ghost government... Let us not bandy words. Power we have not got."

Things seemed to be heading for a denouement, but on the same day they became complicated again. The following resolution was adopted at the sitting of the parliamentary group and the leadership of the Socialist Party: "General de Gaulle, called to

power by the rebels of Algeria and Corsica, recently reported that he began what he refers to as the 'regular procedure' of forming a government. The Socialist deputies declare that ... under no circumstances would they "rally to the candidature of General de Gaulle which, in the form presented, was a challenge to Republican legality".

In opposing the handing over of power to de Gaulle, the Socialists took a position that was close to the line defended by the Communists, who had long advocated joint action in defence of democracy. These two parties, together with the Radicals and other Leftist bourgeois groupings, could have formed a real majority in the National Assembly. That would have been an actual basis for the revival of the Popular Front. The real possibility of its emergence was confirmed on the following day, May 28, when a huge demonstration against the fascist mutiny was held in Paris in response to an appeal by the parties of the Left. Hundreds of thousands marched through the streets of the city, shouting democratic slogans. The slogan heard most often was, "To the museum with De Gaulle, to Paris with *paras*!" There were other factors, too, indicating the ability of the democratic forces to resist the conspiracy. A general strike was frustrated only through desperate machinations of Guy Mollet and others like him. The working people could easily stop the rebels even if the paratroops did indeed fly over from Algeria. The noise the conspirators made was out of all proportion to their actual strength in Metropolitan France.

On the morning of May 28, Salan's deputy General Dulac came over to Colombey with several officers in civilian clothes. Dulac informed de Gaulle that everyone in Algeria was sick and tired of the National Assembly's dodges, and they were no longer in the mood for delaying paratroop landings. De Gaulle inquired about the strength of the force ready to seize power in Paris. Dulac replied that two paratroop regiments would arrive from Algeria, which would be joined by several units stationed near Paris. De Gaulle remarked that that was not enough. When Dulac informed de Gaulle that a special helicopter would be sent to Colombey to fetch him in case of paratroop landings, the General replied that he could not return to Paris by a rebel helicopter. He said: "My desire is that I may be given a chance for quietly completing my investiture. Goodbye, my General!"

Immediately after the departure of the disappointed and puzzled Algerian messenger, another guest arrived at Colombey—to get the first appointment to a high post in the as yet non-existent government of de Gaulle. He was Georges Pompidou, a specialist in philology by education, who had worked in de Gaulle's cabinet since 1944. After the General's resignation, he became his close unofficial collaborator in the R.P.F. In recent years he had been Director General of the Rothschild bank. De Gaulle suggested that

he should leave that post to become director of his future cabinet. Pompidou was very well versed in the developments on the political summit of the Fourth Republic. Together with the General he determined the composition of the future cabinet, as if its formation had been a settled matter. And indeed it was, for de Gaulle felt unerringly that the political leaders still formally in power would do anything to preserve the existing social system intact—which was the main thing. Any hint of a possible union of the Left forces could only increase their impatience to hand power over to de Gaulle.

The events took precisely that course. No sooner had Pompidou gone than Olivier Guichard telephoned from Paris to report that early in the morning President René Coty had accepted Pflimlin's resignation and arranged for the chairmen of both chambers of parliament to meet de Gaulle secretly to discuss the conditions of handing over power to him. The General was asked to come at ten p.m. to the same place where he had met the head of government—now former head of government.

The General went a second time to Saint Cloud. But he had to wait for more than an hour there. Gaston Monnerville, Chairman of the Senate, had agreed to go to Saint Cloud at once, while Le Troquer, Chairman of the National Assembly, took a great deal of persuasion. During the meeting with de Gaulle, that Socialist was also extremely intractable, resolutely objecting, for instance, to the General's demand for extraordinary powers for a term of two years. The General refused to make any concessions, and they failed to reach an agreement; at three in the morning he returned to Colombey.

At half past eight in the morning, President Coty telephoned de Gaulle's aide, Colonel Bonneval (the General was still asleep), and informed him of his decision to send the National Assembly a message demanding investiture, that is, agreement to form a de Gaulle government. He also asked the General to arrive at the Elysée for a personal meeting.

In Paris, Guy Mollet and other Right-wing Socialist leaders were at that time pressing their deputies into revoking the May 27 resolution to vote against de Gaulle. In the end they did so by 77 votes to 74 against. It is noteworthy that the resolution had originally been adopted by 117 votes to three.

De Gaulle was again on the move. He went to Paris and at half past seven in the evening entered the Elysée by the Avenue de Marigny gate. Several hours later the announcement was made that de Gaulle's government would be given extraordinary powers, prepare a new constitution and submit it to a referendum. But many questions still remained unsettled. De Gaulle stayed in Paris.

On May 30 he received the Socialist leaders—Guy Mollet, Auriol, and Deixonne. He rejected the accusations of dictatorial designs and promised to sustain the government's responsibility before parliament, and even to make a personal declaration in the National Assembly. The only concessions he made concerned details and trifles, while in matters of consequence he stuck to his guns. He was now confident of the success of his enterprise. On the same day Pompidou established his headquarters at the Lapérouse and took up his new duties, getting half a year's leave from the Rothschild bank.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, a session of the National Assembly opened at the Palais-Bourbon, and its chairman Le Troquer read out, without any enthusiasm, the President's message: "We are thus on the brink of a civil war... I turned to the most illustrious of Frenchmen..." In conclusion, the President warned that if the National Assembly voted against de Gaulle, he would resign.

On May 31 de Gaulle, on Pompidou's advice, received at the Lapérouse 26 deputies—the leaders of all the non-Communist groups, to dispel their doubts and overcome their waverings. He was reserved though courteous, and even deigned to smile. In the next room, Pompidou was at that time compiling a list of the members of the government, which would include representatives of all the parties that had promised their votes to de Gaulle.

On Sunday, June 1, General de Gaulle appeared, for the first time since January 1946, in the congress hall of the Palais-Bourbon, which he had contemptuously described as a "galanty show". He took his seat on the government bench, then read a declaration written in very general terms, and immediately left the palace. He still refused to be present during the debate, as was the custom.

A vote was taken, the results of which were a foregone conclusion: 329 for the motion with 224 against. Apart from the Communists, about half the Socialists voted against, as well as the Left Radicals headed by Mendès-France, whom de Gaulle regarded as one of the most capable political leaders. "Whatever may be my feelings towards General de Gaulle," he stated, "I shall not vote for his investiture. I do not recognise voting under the threat of an insurrection and a military coup. The decision that is going to be taken is not free—it is dictated."

The General magnanimously covered up that obvious fact by paying the deputies compliments which seemed incredible, coming from him, when on June 2 he submitted the bill of extraordinary powers for his government for their approval, speaking of the pleasure and honour of being that evening among them. On the issue of the new constitution he said: "If the results of the voting that will now take place are the result of your consensus, he who

appeals to you now will be proud of it all his life."

"Paris is well worth a mass," said Henri IV; as de Gaulle returned in the evening to his hotel, he would merely say in passing: "I have won!"

But even the realisation of a long-awaited victory, which immediately offered him an immense scope for action, did not overcome his inclination to see everything in a gloomy, pessimistic light. It was his age that now depressed him. "I have arrived ten years too late... Ah! if only I was sure of having ten years before me...." He had often said that one must not assume the highest responsibility when one was over sixty. And he was 67. It is all the more striking that that moment marked the beginning of a new phase in the General's life in which he demonstrated energy, will, purposefulness, and passion for action so great that much younger men surrounding him were amazed. He seemed to confirm the well-worn truism that old age is the illusion of youth.

THE TIME OF RECKONING

General de Gaulle, recently a rural dweller, now became master of the Hôtel Matignon. Madame de Gaulle quietly went about arranging life there in a simple, measured pattern in the first floor rooms furnished in the French style. The old building which had once housed the embassy of Austria-Hungary, lost its gloomy aspect. The court was no longer used as a parking lot, and the guards wore dress uniforms every day. A musical pavilion in the deeper recesses of a beautiful park with a great many birds was converted into a chapel. Did the time perhaps come for the General to rest from the tension of the recent weeks, sleepless nights and all the vicissitudes from which he had emerged victorious? On the contrary, he would now have to perform a feat that had baffled all those highly experienced, knowledgeable, and cunning leaders of the system he had at last brought down.

The composition of the government formed by de Gaulle amazed many politicians. It included some very well-known personages: de Gaulle's deputies, or Vice-Premiers, were Guy Mollet and Pierre Pflimlin. The Ministry of Finance was headed by Antoine Pinay. The rest of the cabinet was much in the same vein: like the Noah's Ark, it carried the representatives of all the varieties of the Fourth Republic's "princes". There were only three Gaullists: Minister of Justice Michel Debré, Minister for the Affairs of the Veterans Edmond Michelet, and Information Minister André Malraux; the last two were by no means among those who expressed the aspirations of the Algerian rebels.

That was why they were puzzled by and indignant about the composition of de Gaulle's government. They found it hard to understand that the General had to pay off his debts—the voting of June 1, and a great deal more. Alain de Sérigny wrote in his paper *L'Echo d'Alger*: "With one or two exceptions, none of the men who had shown the greatest faith in the destiny of French Algeria sat on Sunday on the government bench, neither Bidault, nor Soustelle, nor any of their companions in the struggle."

Of course, de Gaulle foresaw the reaction of the Algerian extremists; he immediately sent a telegram to General Salan: "Coming on Wednesday. Await me calmly, without losing faith."

On June 4 de Gaulle arrived in Algeria. He was greeted by crowds of people along the whole route from the airport to the city. In the Forum, before an immense crowd, the General raised his hands and waited for the cheering to die down. He then flung his first sentence into the crowd: "I understand you!" Noisy cheering again. Then he made a speech in which there were a great many words about fraternity, greatness and magnanimity of France but not the words which the leaders of the rebellion Salan, Soustelle and the others standing next to him expected, the only words that could be a sign of real understanding: "French Algeria" and "integration". True, he seemed to believe in the much advertised "Algerian miracle" and the incredible comedy of Franco-Moslem "fraternising", organised by General Massu's paratroops. De Gaulle declared that from now on "there was only one category of inhabitants throughout Algeria". But the words which everybody hoped for were not forthcoming...

The ringleaders of the rebellion could hardly contain their indignation at the fact that not even Soustelle was included in de Gaulle's government. Sensitive to all the nuances, the General let fall in the conversation with them that soon Soustelle ("my friend Soustelle", he specified) would be given a high appointment worthy of him. In the meantime they worked off their bad temper on the Socialist Lejeun, Minister for the Algerian Affairs, and two of his colleagues, preventing them from appearing on the balcony before the crowd at the General's side. They were suddenly locked up in the adjacent room.

De Gaulle toured the cities of Algiers, Constantine, Bône, Oran, Mostaganem. At one of the meetings, the constant shouting, "Long live Soustelle!" finally made the General lose his temper, and he shouted into the mike: "Be silent, please! Be silent!" The military leaders of the rebellion looked at the General with concern, but they kept silent, waiting, crushed by his authority and self-assurance. Finally, in Mostaganem he would exclaim, just once: "Long live French Algeria!" Did that mean that he had joined the extremists? No, in Paris he would reply to the puzzled queries of his Leftist allies: "Yes, that escaped me. But then, after all, one usually says, 'French Canada', 'French Switzerland'!"

De Gaulle's mere appearance in Algeria solved the most urgent task—quelling the rebellion without jointing the extremists' programme. But they realised it already, and Delbecq's speech on the Algerian radio on June 5 sounded a warning: he said that they would rally round General de Gaulle, but not at any price. "We did not cross the Rubicon to go fishing," said he, adding that they would pursue to the end the cause begun on May 13.

For the time being, the rebellious military had to be satisfied with medals and new stars on their uniforms, which de Gaulle gave

out with a very generous hand. Salan received a War Medal—the highest badge of distinction, Massu, the rank of divisional general, Zeller, the post of an Army Chief of Staff, etc. As for Soustelle, he became Information Minister on July 7; it was best to keep that tireless adventurer under close supervision. On the day of the national celebrations of July 14, paratroops came over to Paris to take part in the parade march through the Champs-Élysées. That was yet another occasion for Paris to see for itself de Gaulle's omnipotence: the mutinous cutthroats, awaited with fear in May, now looked like the most obedient of soldiers.

As for the civilian extremists, the General was even more blunt with them. As soon as he returned to Metropolitan France, the Algerian Committee of Public Safety adopted an impudent resolution demanding the banning of all the political parties in France. De Gaulle's immediate response to that was a telegram to Salan: "With regard to the annoying and untimely incident caused by the peremptory motion of the Algiers Committee of Public Safety, I remind you that this committee has no other right and role than to express, under your supervision, the opinion of its members."

De Gaulle emphatically distanced himself from the Algerian extremists and at the same time demonstrated his liberalism to the political parties and generally the population of Metropolitan France. Here lay his main political interests. To begin with, he had to stabilise the economy in record time. An internal "golden" loan was issued in June, which quickly brought in considerable sums. The bourgeoisie willingly bought state-loan bonds, thus expressing its confidence in de Gaulle. It was not surprising, for the finances were in the hands of the bourgeoisie's direct representative, Antoine Pinay. In general, there were uncommonly large numbers of men connected with banks and monopolies in the new government. The favourable reaction of the Exchange, too, left no doubts as to the class nature of the new power. It was now necessary to consolidate the new power legally, through the introduction of a new constitution.

It was prepared at an extraordinarily fast pace, the procedure being much simplified; de Gaulle constantly pressed the committees involved in the project to hurry. By the middle of August the draft was ready. The traditional French parliamentarism now receded into history. In conformity with the principle of the "division of powers", the rights of parliament and, to a lesser degree, of the government, were drastically cut, while the president was given unprecedented authority. According to Article 16 of the new constitution, the president could assume absolutely unlimited powers if he should deem it necessary. Everyone guessed at once who the president would be. The instability of the internal political situation, and the dependence on the political parties in establishing the new system

and solving the Algerian problem compelled de Gaulle to retain, for the time being, some of the elements of parliamentarism, such as the principle of the government's responsibility to parliament. In any case, the constitution formed the starting point for the movement towards unprecedented personalisation of political power. The 1958 constitution proved to be merely the first stage in shaping the institutions and methods of administration in the Fifth Republic. A great deal depended on how the constitution was enforced and by whom. For the time being, de Gaulle agreed to a certain compromise with the parties of the "system".

In the new constitution, de Gaulle's world outlook permeated with the spirit of history and oriented towards the past, his instinctive inclination towards the monarchic idea, strangely coincided with the latest tendency of state-monopoly capital towards establishing strong power. At the same time the constitution was in keeping with the mass antiparlamentarism widespread in the last years of the Fourth Republic, when it was doomed to impotence.

The eclectic nature of the new constitutional document later inspired jurists to search for the sources of its various propositions. The nature of these precedents, though differing in time and circumstances, lent the constitution a certain integrality, which was expressed in the tendency towards maximal independence of the practical functioning of real power from its source—universal suffrage. De Gaulle's constitutional views, strikingly set forth in his 1946 speech in Bayeux, have already been outlined. Of considerable interest are also the projects worked out during the war by Michel Debré, who now directed the writing of the new constitution. It was at that time that the president was directly called a "republican monarch" elected for a term of 12 years. This term was arrived at by calculating the mean time of the reign in feudal France. In short, the General created a state to suit his own taste, although it happened to approach the mould French big business badly needed.

When the text of the constitution was ready, de Gaulle immediately left, on August 20, on a long tour of French Black Africa. Why did he go there, though he had plenty to do in Paris? The reason for the trip to Algeria had been clear: there was a rebellion there, but Black Africa still remained relatively calm. The point was that for the General, Africa and the approval of the constitution, as well as the solution of the Algerian problem, were closely linked. Just as during the war the black continent had served as the territorial basis of Free France, it now was to become the cornerstone of new France "from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset". The new constitution envisaged the founding of a vast Franco-African commonwealth. The future president of France would simultaneously be president of that commonwealth.

De Gaulle was warmly welcomed in the African countries. Opening an old wound, the General said in the capital of West Africa: "It is always a pleasure to come to Dakar, even when I enter it without difficulty... I was unable to enter Dakar during the war!" The warm reception accorded to de Gaulle was very simply explained: the Africans wanted to see him as a liberator. Indeed, he spoke of their right to independence, which they might obtain by a referendum, according to the new constitution. But independence, de Gaulle warned, would mean immediate breaking-off of all relations with France. De Gaulle's reckoning was just right; only Guinea dared to take that step, so that the plan for a huge federal complex seemed to hold great promise. All of this was linked with the Algerian problem. "It is for Algeria that I am constructing the Community," said de Gaulle in Dakar. He counted on the Algerians to want to join the community and everything would be just fine. It was a splendid plan, or would be, if it had any chance of success.

For the time being, however, everything seemed to be running smoothly. On September 28, a constitutional referendum took place in France and her overseas possessions. Before the referendum, the General said that 70 per cent of votes "would be a success". In Metropolitan France, nearly 80 per cent voted for the constitution. "I am not one of those who complain that they have too many votes," said de Gaulle. And he had no reason to complain, for it was a clear victory, which could be explained by a combination of many favourable factors. Strange as it may seem, the text of the constitution itself was the least of them. Half the voters had not read it at all. Of greatest importance was the hope of many Frenchmen that de Gaulle would, in one way or another, lead the country out of the Algerian blind alley. True, no one (de Gaulle included) had a clear idea of how that could be achieved. That was why both the supporters of "French Algeria" and men of diametrically opposing tendencies voted for the constitution.

The main factor was the old faith in the "man of June 18". The people voted for de Gaulle personally, not for a definite political programme. Actually, the referendum turned out to be a plebiscite. Raymond Aron, the well-known sociologist, wrote that the Fifth Republic was engendered by a blessed leader. French sociologists therefore described de Gaulle's power as "charismatic"—power that was not based on laws, a definite programme or objective social processes but on an instinctive belief in his extraordinary qualities, a feeling of trust and attraction toward him, and the psychological reaction of submitting to his mysterious charm. This sort of psychoanalysis contains, of course, a certain modicum of the truth, although no less important was the mass discontent aroused by the sad results of the activities of the Fourth Republic's leaders.

Other real factors also played a significant role, such as the methods of preparing the referendum and its actual conduct. It was not for nothing that de Gaulle included in his government the leaders of the principal non-Communist parties. All of them voted for a positive answer. Apart from the Communists, only some Socialists and Radicals rejected the new constitution. As for the Communist party, it found itself in a difficult position. Mass antiparlamentarism, fear of a civil war and faith in de Gaulle carried away even some of the voters who had usually supported the Communist Party. In any case, the new state structure was now legalised and de Gaulle could tackle Algeria in real earnest. Here too a referendum was held, in which 96 per cent voted for the new constitution.

The organisers of the voting modestly described this result as a "technical success". The referendum had been conducted by the army and the extremists, who had turned it into a mockery and a farce.

In October 1958, a new stage in de Gaulle's Algerian policy began. On October 23, he gave the first of his press conferences that would from now on become a permanent institution, as it were, of the new regime. De Gaulle offered the Algerian independence fighters to conclude the "peace of brave men". For this, they had to use the "white flag of truce". In other words, de Gaulle offered them simple surrender without any political guarantees whatever. The National Liberation Front, or F.L.N., and the Provisional Government of Algeria just formed, naturally rejected this proposal. Simultaneously, a noisy propaganda campaign was begun advertising the "Constantine plan", that is, the plan for Algeria's economic development. Besides, de Gaulle hoped that elections to the National Assembly, conducted in Algeria, would result in the emergence of a Moslem political élite, which would be a more tractable partner in solving the Algerian issue than the F.L.N. But the deputies sent to the Assembly as a result of the elections, again controlled by the extremists, were all adherents of "integration", which the General continued to evade. The only element of the Algerian policy that was actually implemented in practical terms was the so-called "pacification", that is, apparently endless expansion of military operations.

One could not say, though, that everything was at a dead point. There was some movement, and it was of considerable significance. The General gradually achieved a weakening of the extremists' positions, their separation from the military and eventual isolation. As early as October, he gave orders for all servicemen to leave the "committees of public safety". In reply, the extremists went on strike in Algeria. But the strike was on a small scale only, and the influence of the committees was seriously undermined. That

was the manner in which de Gaulle gradually paid back those who had helped him to come to power in May. In November, he recalled General Salan from Algeria, offering him a purely decorative post of Inspector General of National Defence. Several other generals that had taken part in the May rebellion were also recalled from Algeria.

De Gaulle endeavoured to separate the Gaullists from the most fierce advocates of "integrating" Algeria in France. He saw to it that the latter might not unduly strengthen their positions during parliamentary elections. Before the elections, Jacques Soustelle and other former leaders of the R.P.F. founded a new political party. The General had refused to revive the R.P.F., mindful of his bitter experiences with it. This time, he flatly refused to have any formal links with the new party and, moreover, objected to his brother Pierre participating in the directing committee of the new Gaullist party. The General resolutely put an end to Jacques Soustelle's attempts to associate the new party, the Union for the New Republic (*l'Union pour la Nouvelle République*, or U.N.R.) with the well-known champions of "French Algeria" Bidault, Morice and Duchet. The system of voting during parliamentary elections also became the cause of a conflict between de Gaulle and Soustelle. The General wanted the parties of the Centre and the Socialists to maintain their positions to a certain degree as a counterpoise to Soustelle and the other "integration" advocates.

On November 29-30, the elections were held. The U.N.R. got 212 seats. But the old parties taken together had 251 seats. Even together with the deputies from Algeria, the U.N.R. did not have a majority. To have his hands free, de Gaulle intended to use the remains of the party system he hated. The new electoral procedure greatly reduced the number of deputies from the Communist Party. Although it won more votes than the U.N.R., only ten deputies were elected. To elect one Communist, 380,000 votes were needed, and for a U.N.R. member, 19,000. This detail alone showed clearly just how democratic the Fifth Republic was. However, de Gaulle rejected the suggestions to ban the Communist Party completely. In December, he was elected President, getting 75.5 per cent of the electoral college votes. On January 8, 1959 he was officially inaugurated in his new capacity and settled at the Elysée. At the ceremony of handing over his powers, former President René Coty said: "The first among the French becomes the first in France."

A new government was quickly formed, headed by the principal author of the new constitution, Michel Debré. The procedure for forming a cabinet was greatly simplified. De Gaulle wanted the leader of the Socialists Guy Mollet to remain in the cabinet. But Guy Mollet could not go as far as that for fear of splitting his party: the social policy of the new regime proved to be too conservative and Rightist. Several months before, de Gaulle had intended to

implement "a programme of the Left by the methods of the Right". But there was nothing of the Left in his policy, search as one might. The programme of the government was approved by 453 deputies out of 509. The Communists and the Socialists voted against. Thus the highest organs of the Fifth Republic were established.

Despite all expectations there came a pause in de Gaulle's Algerian policy. Nothing of any significance occurred except for an increase in military operations. At the press conference of March 25, 1959, de Gaulle warned that a prompt solution of the Algerian question was not to be expected, that it would take a long time. During the first year in office de Gaulle saw clearly that the military in Algeria would block any realistic measures. Even within his government he ran into a undercurrent of resistance whenever a search for new solutions was attempted. Not only Jacques Soustelle but the Prime Minister himself, Michel Debré, remained an advocate of "integration". In the meantime the Algerian issue hampered all of de Gaulle's intended movements in starting a new foreign policy, always a matter of prime importance with him.

Algerian affairs therefore remained the theme of de Gaulle's endless cogitations. It was not a question merely of overcoming the resistance of the ultracolonialists. The General also had to overcome an inner struggle, for he had to make up his mind to give up that which had always been the heritage of France and the basis of her might. True, he had long favoured Algeria's independence in private conversation, but private talks and responsible decision are different things. He vacillated between realism and illusions. "The most difficult thing," he said, "is to effect one's own reconversion." On the subject of the inevitability of decolonialisation, he once told his ministers this: "It is no great fun, at my age and with my training, but I have decided in my soul... It is a difficult game that we are going to play, and one that holds nothing enjoyable for me." De Gaulle made up his mind to begin the first major shift in his Algerian policy.

On August 26, 1959, he introduced the Algerian question for debate at the Council of Ministers for the first time. Strange as it may seem, so far it had only been discussed in connection with the budget, the army, etc. By that time, the somewhat unusual style of cabinet meetings chaired by the General had become established. As usual, his authority, imperiousness, and sheer brusqueness overwhelmed the ministers, the Premier included. The ministers were there to carry out his directives only. Sometimes they did not even know the agenda of their meetings and learned of important decisions from the newspapers. Although they were collectively responsible for the destiny of the country, they were not allowed to tackle general political problems. When the General was annoyed by what he believed to be misplaced claims to independent political

judgments, he said: "If you would like to take my place—" Whenever anyone raised a secondary issue, the General would interrupt him: "That is within the province of the minister in his ministry."

At last, the most burning political issue was introduced for debate on August 26. It was not much of a debate, actually, for de Gaulle merely listened to all the members of the government, one by one. Michel Debré, who was the first to speak, declared that there could be no question of establishing an Algerian state, and that France's political, economic and strategic positions in Algeria had to be retained. Jacques Soustelle defended the same positions in an even more incisive form. He was supported, if not so trenchantly, by many other cabinet members. Only a few, like André Malraux and Edmond Michelet, advocated recognition of Algerian independence. When everyone had said their piece, the General concluded: "Gentlemen, I thank you... In the present situation, one must march on or die. I have chosen to march on..."

On September 16, 1959, de Gaulle made a speech in which he solemnly recognised the right of the Algerian population to self-determination. The Algerians themselves would decide their destiny. They could choose one of three paths. The first was secession and complete independence, which would mean the rupture of all links with France. In this case, in the General's view, chaos, misery, and soon, "the warlike dictatorship of the Communists" awaited Algeria. France would employ all means to keep the oil of the Sahara and to regroup the population that would wish to remain French. That was an obvious threat to divide the country. The second path involved "Frenchification", the extension of all the rights and obligations of the French to all the inhabitants of Algeria. De Gaulle made it clear that he considered that path (coinciding with the "integration" idea) to be unrealistic. The third path, association, appeared to him to be the most desirable; he pictured it like this: "Government of the Algerians by the Algerians, relying on the aid of France and in close union with it, for the economy, education, defence, and foreign relations."

But the General declared that none of these versions of self-determination could be implemented immediately. The voting on the destiny of Algeria would take place four years after the cease-fire. There were numerous reservations and contradictions in de Gaulle's speech. He was unwilling to recognise the leaders of the liberation movement, that is, the F.L.N. and the government created on its basis, to be the only representatives of Algeria, and refused to conduct political negotiations with them, consenting to discuss the cease-fire only.

The leaders of the Algerian liberation reacted favourably to the recognition of the right to self-determination, but they demanded political negotiations. They entrusted the conduct of the

negotiations to several F.L.N. leaders captured by the French as early as 1956 and held in prison in France. But de Gaulle refused to talk to them, saying that talks could only be held with those who were fighting. However, an entirely new atmosphere now surrounded the Algerian issue. The response to the new course both in France and abroad was overwhelmingly positive. De Gaulle's recognition of the right to self-determination was his first act approved in principle by the French Communist Party.

However, de Gaulle's courageous stand enraged the French ultracolonialists. The pro-fascist organisations of Europeans in Algeria, and the officers and generals of the army who had long ceased to conceal their discontent with de Gaulle's Algerian policy, were indignant and at the same time confused. Georges Bidault and the other extremist leaders attacked the President. They announced the formation of The Rally for French Algeria (*Rassemblement pour l'Algérie française*).

But on October 15, when the Algerian question was discussed in the National Assembly, the adherents of "integration" suffered a crushing defeat: the Assembly approved de Gaulle's new political course by 441 votes, with 23 against. The outbreak of discontent in the U.N.R. resulted only in eight of its members leaving the party's parliamentary faction. But the opposition outside the Palais-Bourbon was more serious. That became clear on the same night, when Lucien Neuwirth, a U.N.R. deputy and a prominent figure during the May 13 events, reported an extremists' conspiracy in a statement for the press: "It is urgent to recover oneself. The drama may begin tomorrow. Groups of killers have already crossed the Spanish border. The personalities to be slayed have already been assigned. In that way, it is hoped to impress the population that it might not intervene. Thus 18 months after a peaceful revolution, which occurred without a drop of blood, one may become a witness of an outbreak of a fratricidal internal conflict."

Simultaneously with this panicky statement, the car of a Left-wing leader, François Mitterrand, was reported to have been shot at in the centre of Paris. The most terrifying rumours circulated in the capital. But Neuwirth's statement turned out to be merely an echo of an already misfired conspiracy. Huge demonstrations of Europeans in Algeria were expected to coincide with the debate on the Algerian question in the Assembly, while in Paris several assassinations would be carried out and a group of extremist deputies would thrust a resolution on parliament condemning the new policy, so that Debré's government would be compelled to resign. Not a single point of this plan was carried out. The main thing was that the top echelon of army command in Algeria still wavered. Still, it was an alarming symptom. But obstacles always only spurred de Gaulle to more vigorous action. At his November

10 press conference he emphatically confirmed his course toward Algerian self-determination.

The advocates of "French Algeria" also took up more intractable positions. Their animosity towards de Gaulle increased. In November, Ortiz, owner of an Algerian nightclub, united the small-time pro-fascist organisations into a common French National Front (*le Front national français*). Its ideological leader became Susini, Lagailarde's successor. The F.N.F. was closely linked with the "territorial units"—the armed militia of the European population numbering some 20,000. Civilian extremists established close contacts with the military, particularly with General Massu. Preparations for a new rebellion were begun, aimed this time against de Gaulle. The President was roundly reviled at all sorts of mob gatherings, with a great many threats flying about. In December, Bidault went to Algeria and, in his turn, impatiently called for a revolt. The conspirators planned to act in the spring, but the events compelled them to start earlier.

On January 18, a West German newspaper published a sensational interview with General Massu. The hero of the May 13 mutiny declared that the army had made a mistake about de Gaulle, and in the future it would probably refuse to obey the President. Expressing the view widely current in the military circles, Massu said: "We no longer understand his policy. The army could not expect this kind of attitude on his part."

De Gaulle immediately ordered Massu to be recalled from Algeria and relieved of all his posts. General Challe, Commander-in-Chief, also flew over to Paris to take part in the conference on the Algerian issue at the Elysée scheduled for January 22. At the conference, Challe presented de Gaulle with a kind of ultimatum. He demanded a cessation of "political waverings", permission to execute the arrested Algerian resisters and to carry out other punitive measures. The President sharply declined to comply with any of those demands and insisted that Challe should adhere to the course of self-determination for Algeria, and generally be guided by "common sense and the realities".

General Challe also requested that Massu should be permitted to return along with him to Algeria, to avoid any disturbances. "General Massu will not return to Algeria," firmly replied de Gaulle. On the same night, the Commander flew back, alone. There was great excitement in the Algerian capital aroused by the measures against Massu. When the extremists learnt that their favourite general was held in Paris, the indignation grew even more. A mass demonstration was scheduled for January 24. Challe could have prevented the demonstration but failed to do so, believing it to be useful as a means of putting pressure on de Gaulle. However, after the demonstration, towards the evening of January 24, events took an

unexpected turn. Deputy Lagailarde arrived from France and decided to repeat his "feat" of May 13 of the previous year. Leading a gang of fascist thugs, he again appeared in the streets in the uniform of a paratrooper and occupied one of the university buildings. Lagailarde appealed to all those who were ready to shed blood for "French Algeria" to join him. Barricades were erected. The number of the rebels grew. Armed men from the territorial defence units were arriving from all sides. Ortiz and Susini followed Lagailarde's example. Susini declared: "What Algeria has done, it can do again. This time, we shall take our revolution to Paris."

Lines of policemen approached the barricades. The rebels started firing from their covered positions. The police returned fire. As a result, 22 men were killed and some 200 wounded. The casualties were mostly among the police. Paratroops were sent to reinforce them, but they refused to shoot and were obviously in sympathy with the "activists". The mutineers got all their supplies, food and weapons, through the paratroops lines. That was the beginning of the "barricades week" in Algiers.

In Paris, a meeting of the Council of Ministers was called on January 25. General de Gaulle, pale but calm, appeared. He said: "Attention, those who cannot stand sea-sickness. They are willing, perhaps, to abandon ship before the storm. No one is forced to remain in the government." He then let the ministers speak. André Malraux was indignant at the mutiny: "We are faced with the most serious attack against the revival of France since General de Gaulle's return [to power]". He demanded that the mutiny should be crushed by any means. Jacques Soustelle just as resolutely took the side of the rebels and completely justified their actions. He believed the policy of Algerian self-determination to be the cause of the rebellion. Soustelle rejected the use of force against the rebels and suggested that negotiations with them should be initiated.

General de Gaulle was the last to speak; without raising his voice, he resolutely denounced the "stupid and criminal" Algerian rebels. He pointed to the inaction of the military: "The military do not want the Algerian policy of General de Gaulle. Hence the leniency of the commanders." He rejected the proposal for refraining from "shedding blood", for the army existed precisely for shedding blood, the more so that it had already been shed. He firmly declared: "Those who have taken up arms against the state cannot be absolved... The state will not cave in, and the fixed policy will not change. Contacts with the insurgents? At no price! ... The Prime Minister will restrict himself to establishing contacts with responsible officials to put an end to their hesitations. If Challe does not make up his mind, he will be replaced. The insurrection will be suppressed. Invested with supreme responsibility, I shall not divest myself of it. I left in 1946 because I believed that France could manage without me. At present, I have a mission."

In the feverish days of the "barricades week" de Gaulle saw the wavering and faint-heartedness of his closest assistants, of old Gaullists occupying responsible posts, such as Delouvrier, the Delegate-General in Algeria, and others. Attempts were made to exert all kinds of pressure on the President, as well as appeals to his humaneness. Marshal Jouin, de Gaulle's classmate at Saint-Cyr, asked for an audience. "You don't know them," he told de Gaulle. "You must not give the order to shoot. That is madness. You don't know what Algeria is... They will go and drink their *anisette* as usual..."

"I defend the State," the President replied. "I have always affirmed that Algeria would decide its future itself. I cannot permit this insurrection. I shall crush it." Gradually the voices rose. The two men switched to the language of the barracks, and the officials of the Elysée were terrified to hear the bloodcurdling oaths coming from the President's office. There were just as noisy exchanges in those days with Debré and General Massu. On the latter occasion, the aide even called in the guards.

On January 29, at eight o'clock in the evening, the French people saw de Gaulle on the screens of their TV sets. The President said that he was wearing his military uniform to stress the fact that he was speaking not only as Head of State but also as General de Gaulle. First of all, he confirmed again the principle of Algeria's self-determination. He condemned the rebels, those "liars and conspirators". Appealing to the army, he reminded it of its duty and forbade any soldier to take the side of the conspirators "even passively" on pain of harsh punishment. He demanded that the military should restore law and order by all available means. He then flattered the army, saying that he respected and loved its soldiers, and that he valued their services. He ended the speech with these words: "By virtue of the mandate that the people gave me, and of national legality which I have embodied for twenty years, I ask everyone to support me, whatever may happen."

This formula of de Gaulle's appeal to the French people is extremely significant. At that critical moment, he remained true to himself. De Gaulle did not just call on everyone to fight the extremists: he demanded support for *himself* in this struggle. That was a typically Gaullist tactical device which he used throughout his political career. On June 18, 1940, he had also called for the people to rally round him, not just to fight the enemy. He did not trust the people and did not want it to act independently. Always and under all circumstances the people had to rely on him, de Gaulle. But during the "barricades week", just as in 1940, the democratic forces began the struggle on their own, even before they had heard de Gaulle's appeal. In 1940, they had started the heroic internal Resistance, while now they began the fight for peace in Algeria on

an unprecedented scale, on the basis of self-determination and against the ultracolonialists. The Communist Party of France, which had for several years championed peace in Algeria, appealed to the working people to repulse the mutineers. On January 28, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party proposed joint action against the fascist rebels by all the democratic parties and organisations. Thousands of antifascist committees were organised at enterprises and in city districts. On February 1, a one-hour general strike was held in protest against the fascist conspirators and in support of Algeria's right to self-determination. Eleven million people took part in the national strike.

Again one of those moments came when de Gaulle, so remote from the people in his convictions and nature, proved to be on the same side as the French people and real France. Now, the same thing happened as during the war, during the liberation of France and the struggle against the "European army", when the General truly embodied France and her national interest. The principle of self-determination for Algeria was precisely what had long been needed for the solution of the Algerian problem. There certainly remained considerable differences in the understanding and particularly the application of that principle. Still, de Gaulle had found the common denominator thanks to his political intuition and ability to rise above the prejudices of his social background. That gift made de Gaulle priceless in the eyes of the masters of France, of big businessmen. The war in Algeria had long interfered with the smooth running of their affairs.

In the meantime the "activists" in Algeria behind the barricades found themselves isolated first politically and later physically. The paratroops were replaced by conscripts, and the mutineers' camp was now truly besieged. The ringleaders heard the rumour that de Gaulle was not inclined to delay the order to storm and destroy the barricades. So they scattered in a hurry, the more so that the authorities were only after the principal leaders.

After the suppression of the rebellion, de Gaulle replaced Challe as Commander-in-Chief by General Crépin, who was not connected with the extremists. Generals Salan, Challe and Jouhaud were sent into retirement. Others, like Massu, were transferred from Algeria. It was decided to arrest and try the most inveterate civilian and military extremists (Lagailarde, Susini, de Sérigny, Gardes and others). Algerian extremists' organisations were banned, "territorial units" disbanded, and some newspapers closed. On February 5, Soustelle had to leave the cabinet and soon thereafter he was expelled from the U.N.R. As a result of the barricades episode, de Gaulle completely broke off his links with the extremists.

The time had come, it seemed, to implement the course of Algerian self-determination. De Gaulle's popularity had never been

and would never be as great as at that moment. Sociological studies showed that in February 1960, 74 per cent of the French people expressed satisfaction with de Gaulle's activities as President. The General himself was aware of the fact and he was more than ever intent on realising the principle of self-determination. But he still continued to believe that by declaring that principle he would manage to retain the most important positions in Algeria. He hoped to keep Algeria from attaining independence as long as possible. His Algerian policy was affected by so many factors, and he had to take into account so many complex internal and external circumstances, that it appeared incredibly tangled and intricate. He followed a very twisted path, sometimes stopping suddenly and even retreating, yet he kept moving.

After the turbulent month of January 1960, a great deal became clearer, but mostly in the sense that the difficulties of conducting the policy of self-determination became more apparent. De Gaulle parted with some of his illusions, which vanished into thin air right before his eyes. The hope that Europeans in Algeria would support his policy went up in smoke. The state that he had created had proved to be far from the firm and reliable instrument of his policy that he had intended it to be. During the "barricades week" he discovered that everyone, beginning with ministers and ending with rank-and-file policemen, sabotaged his orders. On the other hand, the Left, particularly the Communist Party, which were not in a position, one would have thought, to affect the political issues under the new constitution, had immense power. Of course, he could have relied on that power and thus crush the extremists' resistance to the policy of self-determination. As always, however, the Left-wing, democratic camp inspired de Gaulle's apprehensions just as much as the Right-wing extremists. He therefore used the favourable opportunity offered by the crushing of the rebellion to press parliament into passing a law on February 3 which gave him extraordinary powers for a term of one year—the right to promulgate decrees that would be laws. He wanted to strengthen his positions, for he sensed that, though the storm was only beginning, the pitching and rolling were so bad that he himself felt a little sea-sick at times.

De Gaulle was most of all worried about the army—the army that had always been the focus of his thoughts since youth. It was the army that now threatened his hopes for restoring France to greatness. Early in March he flew over to Algeria and set out on the famous round of visits to officers' messes. He spent several days inspecting units of the army in the field. Those were not the usual kind of visits to parade grounds where the troops froze in orderly ranks and the conversations were restricted to the high command. This time the General appeared in the front lines, in barracks,

officers' messes, where crowds of junior officers surrounded him. He talked to them informally and attentively listened to them. This time the journalists were not allowed to accompany de Gaulle, and his words were not intended for the papers. Still, they did appear in the French press, which knew all, criticised all, distorted all, and failed to understand a great deal. Indeed, the recent events and the statements of the General himself had created the impression that the Algerian drama was nearing its conclusion, that peace was about to descend on the country. And there was the General telling the officers that they faced a long war, that they had to win a victory that had eluded them for four years. Of course, he still spoke of self-determination, he still said that the Algerians would themselves determine their destiny. But he confidently assured the lieutenants and captains avidly listening to him: "I do not believe that the Algerians will choose independence. France must not leave. She has a right to be in Algeria. She will remain here."

The press and later the public in France were puzzled and indignant. So what was de Gaulle really after? In his book *The Edge of the Sword* he once wrote: "One must always be in accord with one's hidden motives." So everyone tried to guess those motives. Poisonous suspicions were sometimes expressed that the ending of the war would not be to de Gaulle's advantage. He was given his powers so that he might ensure peace. If he attained that goal, he would naturally be no longer needed and would have to go again. It might very well be, then, that he had no desire for peace at all, deep at heart.

There was, of course, a great deal of cunning and ambiguity in the General's words and actions at all times, but it would be unjust to suspect him of that kind of vulgar baseness. He did not need power as such but the chance to use it for France's aggrandisement—under his leadership, of course. For that, he had to remove the Algerian malignant tumour from the body of France. To perform that operation, he would need anesthesia for the army, the intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, the workers, etc. To each, their proper dose.

De Gaulle knew that he would have to begin negotiations with the F.L.N. To negotiate in his usual style he would need sound positions based on French military superiority over the Algerian liberation army. No one but those officers could achieve that. But they could not fight the Algerians for the independence of Algeria! He had to set another objective before them, a French one. Besides, one might expect new conspiracies and rebellions, so the army had to be protected against the influence of the rabid extremists. Those were the reasons that brought de Gaulle to the officers' messes.

De Gaulle's statements did not remain unnoticed by the Algerian Front of National Liberation. Its leaders accused de Gaulle of closing the door on talks. That would have been correct, if the General had not simultaneously sought ways to begin negotiations—

though he wanted them to be advantageous to him alone. With all his realism, he still hoped to retain as much in Algeria as possible and to cede as little as possible. On de Gaulle's instructions, contacts were sought with the Algerians through various unofficial channels. He got reports that contact had been established with two prominent officers of the Algerian army who were interested in the negotiations. De Gaulle decided to conduct the talks personally and on June 10 secretly received those officers at the Elysée. The results of the talks inspired certain hopes, but on their return to Algeria, both emissaries soon died under mysterious circumstances.

On June 14 de Gaulle made a speech in which he confirmed Algeria's right to self-determination and addressed the "leaders of the insurrection": "I declare to them that we await them here to find with them an honourable end to the fighting that still goes on, to regulate the purpose of the armed forces, and to assure the fate of the combatants." There was no hint at political talks there, and yet the F.L.N. agreed to send its representatives to France; so on June 25-29 the first official Franco-Algerian talks, however tentative, were held at Melin, 40 km from Paris. The French side was only prepared to discuss the cease-fire and nothing else, as if the Algerian liberation army had suffered a defeat and surrendered! All attempts to raise political questions were unavailing. The result was a complete fiasco.

After that, four months passed without any significant advances in de Gaulle's Algerian policy. The war became even more fierce. The advocates of "French Algeria", overjoyed at the failure of the negotiations at Melin, mobilised their forces. In June 1960, their leaders gathered for a "colloquy" in Vincennes, a suburb of Paris. They were all of them familiar faces—Bidault, Delbecque, Duchet, Lacoste, and others. They again confirmed their hostility towards the policy of self-determination and set up a special committee. The Algerian extremists, in their turn, founded a new Front of French Algeria, with a branch in Metropolitan France. Pro-fascist military groups rallied round retired General Salan. Madrid became their centre of operations.

At that time, the evolution of the Algerian problem was increasingly affected by the movement for peace. It was precisely in the autumn of 1960 that it became particularly widespread among the masses. The talks in Melin had excited certain hopes; their failure gave rise to bitter disappointment and increased the resolution to fight against the war. The movement took various forms ranging from mass organised actions of Communist workers to such extreme methods as direct aid to the F.L.N. In September, the members of the "Jeanson network" who had directly collaborated with the Algerian liberation movement were tried. At the same time the "Manifesto of 121" was published, signed by prominent cultural workers. The manifesto justified refusal to participate in the war

and even desertion. The number of deserters had perceptibly grown in the meantime. Legal proceedings were instituted against those who signed the manifesto. Among those accused was Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher and writer of world fame. On learning of it, de Gaulle told his close associates: "It is the *métier* of these intellectuals to pound the rostrum, to claim to alert public opinion. They are in their usual role. Let them do it. It is not the first time that these gentlemen give trouble to public authorities." He recalled Zola, Rolland, and especially Voltaire. Unofficially, he requested the legal authorities to drop the charges against Sartre.

Could it be that he did not attach much importance to the movement for peace in Algeria? No, on the contrary, he was astounded by its scope, and it compelled him to work out even more carefully his new moves in the complex Algerian game. It was at that time that de Gaulle took decisions that 16 months later led to the ending of the war.

A new formula became frequent in the speeches at that time—"Algerian Algeria", which enraged the extremists. On September 5, during his regular press conference, he declared that the only question now was that "Algerian Algeria" should remain "in association and friendly union" with France. In other words, the price of self-determination would be France's keeping its most important positions and privileges in Algeria. The President also said: "On all sides I hear: de Gaulle can solve the Algerian problem. If he does not do it, no one will do it. Well, let them give me a chance to do it. I do not ask for more."

To whom did the General thus appeal? The staunch advocates of "French Algeria"? But they were no longer capable of perceiving any logical arguments. The forces of the Left? But he viewed their struggle for peace as a powerful counterpoise to the extremists, at the least. He was addressing the wavering, those who could not yet finally concede that Algeria was not France. They were everywhere: in the army, in parliament, in the state apparatus, even in his government. Curiously, he sometimes had to resort to methods that were extremely strange for him; one might even call them subterfuges.

On November 4, he made a speech on the radio and TV. That speech contained something new, although the novelty lay in words only. But, for de Gaulle, words were a most important instrument of political action. For the first time he made use of the term "Algerian republic", which "will exist one day". The commentators took that statement to be a promise of formal recognition, *de facto*, of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. That was a fresh sensation that excited a feeling of satisfaction in some and rage in others. His Prime Minister Michel Debré was among the latter; he violently protested: "But this text has absolutely nothing to do with the version I read." With disarming frankness, the

General replied: "That is true. I had no intention to speak of the 'Algerian Republic'. But there, I have said it. All things considered, that is even better, for it will end thus."

In November 1960 the General started preparations for new steps in Algerian policy. The post of state Minister for Algerian Affairs was created, directly under the President. Louis Joxe, de Gaulle's companion-in-arms from the war times and an experienced diplomat, was appointed to that post. By that device, the Algerian affairs were removed from under the control of the members of the government who, despite their personal loyalty to the General, still could not overcome their weakness for "French Algeria".

On November 14, de Gaulle announced at a meeting of the Council of Ministers his decision to conduct a referendum on the Algerian issue, setting January 8, 1961 as the date for the voting. Intending to act more decisively at last, he wanted to secure a new expression of France's confidence, and in the process consolidate his personal positions.

In that month, de Gaulle turned 70. He received birthday greetings with gloomy annoyance: "It amuses you to see me getting older." But that was something more than the usual pessimistic tone in which he spoke of himself. The General felt his strength ebb, and his health go. One heard him say, "I am at the end of my rope". He recalled the past, the times of Free France: "What I did in London was exciting. And now—" De Gaulle tried to look the same as ever, as "the man of June 18"; during public appearances, he did not wear spectacles. But he did not see the features of those to whom he talked: they were mere shadows. At about that time, receiving Abbot Fulbert Youlou, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, who wore a *soutane*, he addressed him as *Madame*... The General recounted that episode with bitterness: the image of physical decay he presented was distasteful to him. But his strength of character triumphed, and he added: "In the life of a man, just as in the life of a nation, there are desperate hours. The proper thing for a man of will is not to let oneself to be discouraged."

The events would soon demand of him great tenacity and self-control. Early in December de Gaulle went on another trip (this time his last) through Algeria. He intended to prepare the army and the administration for the coming self-determination of the country. The situation there remained tense, the Europeans were alarmed, and the President's presence was intended to calm the passions. Hadn't he been able to put out the rebellion in June 1958 by his presence alone? Then, French Algerians had cheered him enthusiastically. This time, the same people gave him quite a different reception. General Salan's agents especially came from Spain to Algeria to organise a demonstration or even a new mutiny, if they could. There were even suggestions to assassinate General de Gaulle

during the disturbances, putting General Salan in power and thus ensuring the triumph of the cause of "French Algeria". On the eve of the General's arrival, a general strike was declared, and the extremists called on the populace to mount demonstrations. The leaflets printed especially for that occasion appealed to them, "Say no to de Gaulle!" or, "The decisive moment has come, it will be too late tomorrow". On December 9, huge crowds met de Gaulle. They behaved quite differently from his previous visits. The Europeans expressed open hostility and shouted such slogans as, "French Algeria!", "Save Algeria!" But the Arabs, who also went out into the streets to meet the General, shouted: "Long live de Gaulle!", "Algerian Algeria!" For the first time, the indigenous population of the country expressed its aspirations openly.

De Gaulle behaved as usual, that is, with great composure, giving no outward sign of his indignation at the conduct of his compatriots. He often mixed with the crowd and shook hands all round, as if he heard none of the hostile shouts of the French. The situation was extremely tense. The demonstrations were renewed on the next day. Moslems took to the streets carrying the white-and-green flags of the Algerian Republic and the slogans, "Long live the F.L.N.!" Clashes began, and shots were fired. The "activists" attacked the Moslems, and street fighting broke out everywhere. Paratroops opened fire on crowds of Arabs. Hundreds of dead and thousands of wounded lay in the streets. De Gaulle flew over Algiers and Oran in a helicopter and saw everything. He did not lose his presence of mind and even felt gloomy satisfaction. How could anyone reject the policy of self-determination after all that?

The extremists started the bloody clashes intending to paralyse the policy of common sense. And again they achieved quite the opposite effect. De Gaulle came to the conclusion that any further delaying of negotiations was inadmissible, but the talks would have to be on terms maximally convenient for France, of course. The referendum in January was conducted precisely in that spirit. The voters did not merely have to approve self-determination but also the establishment of local administrative organs in Algeria before its implementation. De Gaulle still had hopes for creating some sort of Algerian power besides the F.L.N. In any case, that might be a means of pressure or, more precisely, blackmail, at the forthcoming talks. 75 per cent of the voters said yes to de Gaulle during the referendum. Although the number of votes diminished compared to 1958, he got a new vote of confidence.

On January 15, the F.L.N. leaders let de Gaulle know, through the Swiss government, that their men were ready for a preliminary secret meeting with a French representative personally authorised by de Gaulle. The General entrusted the talks to Georges Pompidou, at that time director of the Rothschild bank. He got leave from the

bank "for the winter sports season" and on January 19 went to Switzerland, where he met the Algerians in Lucerne. From time to time Pompidou returned to Paris and then went back "to ski". On March 30, a communiqué was published to the effect that official Franco-Algerian negotiations would soon begin in Evian. On the following day, Camille Blanc, Mayor of this small health resort on the border, died in an explosion of a plastic bomb. A "festival" of explosions began throughout France. One of the bombs went off at the Palais-Bourbon.

The fact was that early in March, also in Switzerland, a congress of military and civilian extremists had taken place which had set up the Secret Armed Organisation (*l'Organisation Armée Secrète*, or O.A.S.). The old sign of the French fascists, the Celtic cross, became its emblem. The O.A.S. was headed by General Salan, who chose a spate of bombings as the main instrument of fighting against peace in Algeria, which plunged France in panic, confusion, and political chaos.

While the beginning of the negotiations in Evian was delayed on various pretexts, France was shaken by a fresh dramatic event on April 22. In the morning, Algerian radio announced that power was now in the hands of Generals Challe, Jouhaud, and Zeller, who had secretly arrived there and were joined on the same day by Salan, who flew over from Spain. Using the paratroops of the Foreign Legion, they seized all the key buildings of the Algerian capital and arrested government representatives. Challe appointed himself Supreme Commander and declared his "right" to extend his activities to Metropolitan France. The mutinous generals' junta also seized power in Oran and Constantine.

In one of their proclamations the generals declared that "they refused to abandon a French province, as a certain general with a temporary title did in London, on June 18, 1940". The rebels went on a rampage, behaving with typically criminal impudence. After arresting the three government members in Algiers, one of the paratroop colonels sent Debré this telegramme: "Three ministers exchanged for one ape."

In Paris, the Hôtel Matignon panicked. The threat of the landing of paratroops threw Debré into a state of complete confusion.

General de Gaulle's conduct sharply differed from the irresolute and panicky actions of his ministers. "How dared they?" he exclaimed on learning of the events in Algeria, and he resolutely set out to crush the military putsch. It was no simple task. It got so that de Gaulle's orders to the army were not sent out at all: General Beaufort, head of his military office, was a direct accomplice of the rebels. But de Gaulle did not overestimate the four generals' chances of success. He did not even change his ordinary routine. De Gaulle knew well the men leading the coup, and he had a low opinion of

their courage and ability to act. When they warned him that General Challe at the head of his paratroops would soon be in Paris, he replied: "Yes, Fidel Castro, he would be here. Not Challe." On the night of April 24, de Gaulle asked his frightened ministers: "They are not here yet?" And added: "Stop snivelling." He believed that the greater part of the army would not support the generals. Indeed, only 15 thousand paratroops joined them. At first, de Gaulle did not even want to speak on the radio. Still, on April 23, at eight o'clock in the evening, he appeared on the TV screens wearing his uniform. He severely condemned the rebellion, declaring: "In the name of France, I order that every means, I repeat, every means should be employed to stop these men everywhere... I forbid all Frenchmen, all soldiers above all, to carry out any of their orders... Frenchwomen, Frenchmen, aid me!" On April 24 a general strike began in response to an appeal by the parties of the Left and trade unions, it involved 12 millions. The working class was ready to take arms to defend the Republic. However, General de Gaulle objected to proposals to give out arms to volunteers: "I do not want to be the hostage of the C.G.T.,* the Communist Party and the U.N.E.F.**" As always, de Gaulle feared the Left more than anything. Even when he acted in the spirit of their demands and slogans, he did not admit for a second even the possibility of an alliance with them. The General was convinced that he did not serve any single class but France as a whole, the state that in his view stood above parties. In connection with the generals' putsch, he even condemned the bourgeoisie when he saw that the bourgeois state apparatus was openly or secretly in sympathy with the rebels: "The élite no longer serves the state. Nearly all the cadres of the nation are against me. That is treason on the part of the bourgeoisie." And he added: "In 1940, I was also alone... All these notables, all these bourgeois, all these fine talkers of the Parisian salons, these grumblers and malcontents, what part of the country do they represent? Three per cent? Five per cent? Scum. Scum, I say. What is left to me is the deep masses of the people. Under these conditions, the people will speak out."

De Gaulle's policy on the Algerian issue, like his activities during the Second World War, ultimately corresponded to the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the French people. But in this case, too, de Gaulle's actions were determined by the objective laws of class struggle. He used the generals' putsch to consolidate still further his personal power, invoking the notorious 16th article of the constitution, which gave him unlimited powers. Whom was

* C.G.T.—*Confédération Générale du Travail*, General Confederation of Labour.—Ed.

** U.N.E.F.—*Union Nationale des étudiants de France*, National Union of French Students.—Ed.

he going to use it against? Generals Challe and Zeller had been arrested, Salan and Jouhaud had disappeared. But that did not matter; the attack from the Right gave him a chance to get armed against the Left, too—just in case.

The war in Algeria, however, continued to torment France, although de Gaulle had been in power for three years already. He had to move forward. On May 20, 1961, Franco-Algerian negotiations in Evian were renewed. The French delegation tried to cede as little as they could and to get as much as they could. The French were particularly insistent in their demand for separating the oil-rich Sahara from Algeria. Three weeks of negotiations yielded no results. On June 13, de Gaulle interrupted them. On July 20, the talks were renewed but discontinued on July 28 again.

In the summer of 1961, de Gaulle's Algerian policy seemed to have bogged down. Simultaneously, he ran into serious domestic political difficulties. A conflict broke out in parliament over differences in agricultural policy. Another conflict was coming to a head in the government itself. Michel Debré demanded the resignation of Edmond Michelet, whom he called an F.L.N. representative in the government. Debré himself persisted in his demands for a firm policy towards Algeria. It was he who insisted on some "Algerian" power countervailing the F.L.N. All attempts in that direction, though, produced but pitiable results. It was difficult for de Gaulle to cooperate with Debré. True, the Premier had offered to resign at least a dozen times. But the General did not want to let him go. A champion of "French Algeria" at the head of the government was for de Gaulle yet another means of setting at rest the fears of the Europeans in Algeria and in particular of the army. In the autumn of 1961, an unprecedented crisis within de Gaulle's still very young state broke out. There were two times as many strikes in that year as compared with the previous one. Disturbances among farmers enveloped vast areas of the country. The O.A.S. extended its activities. Between the beginning of 1961 and November, 350 explosions occurred in Metropolitan France. The O.A.S. thugs committed their worst outrages in Algeria. Things went from bad to worse, and it was no accident that the share index at the Paris exchange fell sharply in October 1961.

On September 8, the first attempt was made on de Gaulle's life. Everybody was aware that an assassination attempt was possible at any minute. The purely personal character of his power and of his policy made him a prime target for O.A.S. fascists. But it was not that organisation alone that made plans for the General's assassination. Ten years later, the press would reveal that there was yet another secret organisation of highly placed military and civilian leaders, generals, senators, deputies, many of whom had been Gaulists but in 1961 decided to destroy de Gaulle. The organisation was

referred to as the "old army staff". It acted much more carefully than the O.A.S., avoiding open ties, for example, with the noisy militants of "French Algeria". It was this organisation that prepared the most dangerous of all the 15 attempts on de Gaulle's life, including the first one. Some 20 kms from Paris, near Pont-sur-Seine on the road to Colombey a pile of sand lay by the roadside in which a bomb was hidden with 45 kilograms of explosives in it. It was about ten at night on September 8 when the President's car, the car of the security men and two outriders on motorbikes appeared on the road. As de Gaulle's car went past the heap of sand, there was an explosion, and a column of fire went up toward the sky. But there were no casualties. The details of the affair became known to the public only much later. Security men had accidentally learnt of preparations for the assassination and defused the bomb, and only the napalm canister exploded. But why wasn't the bomb fully dismantled? No one knew. It was insinuated that an unsuccessful attempt at assassination might prove useful for political purposes.

At the end of September de Gaulle gave up the claim of retaining direct control over the Sahara. Contacts with the F.L.N. were renewed. But O.A.S. gangsters stepped up mass terror. The public was shocked at the impunity with which they committed their crimes. Was de Gaulle chary of spoiling relations with them? On February 8, 1962, a mass demonstration of protest took place in Paris. This time the police showed extraordinary zeal. Nine demonstrators died as the police attacked the crowds. On the following day, two million Parisians went on strike. On February 13, the funeral of the police victims became a silent but tragic and formidable expression of the people's anger. It was impossible to go on dragging out the Franco-Algerian talks after that. General de Gaulle made frequent and impatient calls to Louis Joxe, who headed the French delegation in Evian. He demanded the speediest conclusion of the negotiations: "Insist on the essential. You understand me."

On March 18, 1962, the Franco-Algerian agreements on the cease-fire, on the conditions of handing over the sovereignty, and the future relations between France and independent Algeria were signed. On the following day the war was over. On April 8, a referendum took place in France in which 90 per cent of the French voters approved the Evian agreements. General de Gaulle thus carried out his most important obligation to the country.

The Council of Ministers gathered to discuss the agreements with Algeria. André Malraux triumphantly welcomed them and called them a true victory. Prime Minister Debré sharply rejoined: "It is above all a victory over ourselves." They were both right, each in his own way.

At the end of the meeting, General de Gaulle said: "We have attempted in Algeria what was humanly possible. This agreement is

the outcome of a long crisis. This outcome is the only possible one, and it must be accepted. It has become ineluctable, if one takes into account the general movement of the peoples... It is an honourable outcome. It is unnecessary to find fault with what has been done and what has not. Humans are humans, and they can err. But it was indispensable that we should get France out of a situation which brought nothing but misfortunes. Now we shall turn to Europe. The era of organised continents follows the colonial era."

There is no need to analyse in detail the content of the Evian agreements. Much of that has been discarded in the subsequent events. The main thing was that peace was established. Could de Gaulle have attained it sooner and better? One might argue the point to infinity. In any case, the history of the disintegration of the imperialist colonial system does not know any other situation that would be as complicated and seemingly hopeless as the one in which France found itself because of Algeria. Not a single former colonial power had to suffer such inner conflicts over the struggle of the colonial peoples for their liberation. In fact, de Gaulle himself concluded, during those years, agreements on the independence of many African countries, and none of them produced any upheavals. Algeria was quite different. General de Gaulle ran into exceptional difficulties there. Was he quite consistent in his policy of self-determination for Algeria? Replying to various opinions on that score, de Gaulle himself said frankly: "I have never wavered over Algeria. What I decided to do conformed with the national interest. I never accepted integration. That was clear as early as May 13, 1958. I never vacillated. Understandably, I moved step by step. Politics is the art of realities."

Algeria's self-determination had proved all the more difficult to achieve since de Gaulle had had to overcome the active and, much more often, passive resistance of men of his own background, men close to him in intellectual makeup and origin. And then, he had had to retreat, which he did not like to do at all. When Colonel Passy, de Gaulle's old companion-in-arms from the London times, expressed his regrets and doubts over the giving up of Algeria, he replied: "I could not act differently. When I came [to power] in 1958, Algeria had been lost. If you think that it had been agreeable to me... I have suffered more than you."

Regardless of the political sympathies or antipathies towards de Gaulle, it must be conceded that implementing the policy of Algerian self-determination demanded persistence, skilled political manoeuvring and courage. Later, *L'Humanité*, the paper of the French Communists, would point out that in the solution of the Algerian problem, General de Gaulle had demonstrated his realism and the abilities of a state leader with exceptional brilliancy.

For the first time since 1939, no one fought for France or in the name of France. In France itself, though, bitter and violent strife seemed endless. It was all reminiscent of the counterrevolutionary revolt in the Vendée and of the fury of the Chouans. We refer to the O.A.S., of course. In Algeria, it attempted to leave the Arabs nothing but scorched earth, stirring the Europeans to desperate last outrages. In panic, hundreds of thousands of the French left for France and settled in the southern departments. Those embittered men became fertile soil for the activities of the O.A.S. and the National Council of the Resistance headed by Georges Bidault. New assassination attempts were made on de Gaulle. The Chouans refused to quiet down. The extremists' leaflets said: "Today or tomorrow, despite everybody and everything, the traitor de Gaulle will be killed like a mad dog." The General took those threats with great composure and did not willingly give in to the demands of the security service: "I am doing my job, and you will please do yours." Still, he now took a helicopter to Colombey, and his route to the airfield was constantly changed.

But there was an informer at the Elysée who reported all of the President's moves to 34-year-old Colonel Bastien-Thiry by telephone. That fascist, who believed himself to be the instrument of the nation's will, had directed, on the Old Army Staff instructions, the unsuccessful attempt near Pont-sur-Seine. In the summer of 1962, in conjunction with the O.A.S., he prepared an attack on the President by an action group armed with automatic weapons. The choice of his accomplices was quite characteristic: a former agent of the French secret service, a Lieutenant who had taken part in the military putsch in Algeria, a paratrooper dishonourably discharged, a former owner of a large farm in Algeria, three Hungarians who had escaped from their country in 1956. On August 22, submachine-guns in hand, they sat in their cars at the crossroads in Petit-Clamart, a suburb of Paris. At eight p.m. the presidential car and its escorts appeared. General and Mme de Gaulle were in the first Citroën, in the back seat, while their son-in-law Colonel de Boissieu sat in front next to the chauffeur. Several submachine-guns started firing at once. One bullet

went through the back window, another, through the body of the car, and pieces of the upholstery fell on the President's head. Of the 150 bullets fired by the attackers six hit the car. The chauffeur (the same one that had driven the car at Pont-sur-Seine) pushed the pedal to the floor, and the two Citroëns escaped at full speed. The attackers at first pursued them but then dispersed. At the Villacoublay camp the General got out of the car and, shaking off bits of glass from his suit, said: "Decidedly, these gentlemen are poor shots." He then told his son-in-law: "I shall never forgive those impudent fellows for shooting at a woman."

Bastien-Thiry would be one of the few fascist terrorists who would get what he deserved: he would be executed by a firing squad. On the whole, General de Gaulle did not fight the O.A.S. with any particular ferocity. Incidentally, he was never vengeful. Thus, all the four generals who headed the putsch in April 1961 and ended up in the dock, got off with jail sentences. De Gaulle did not want to tread too heavily on the whole extremist movement, so as to be able to solve his main tasks with least interference.

The assassination attempt at Petit-Clamart marked the beginning of a new stage in General de Gaulle's activity. In 1962 it became quite clear that from the moment of his coming to power in 1958 de Gaulle had had a rigid programme of transforming France to suit his views. He never expounded it in detail, merely stating the general formula: to restore the state and the greatness of France. He carried out the separate concrete items of this programme as the circumstances permitted, rather than in a previously worked out temporal sequence. But he did have a programme, and he had carried out the first point of that programme, having achieved peace in Algeria. He would now purposefully stride forward.

Edgar Faure, a major postwar political leader of France and one of the few who enjoyed de Gaulle's respect, wrote: "The movement was triggered off by a chance event: the assassination attempt of Petit-Clamart. We witness here a typical case of interaction between the planned and the unforeseen... The General wanted, considering that he might disappear, not to leave unachieved that which he regarded as the fundamental part of his work: the structure of the state."

But had not de Gaulle already created a state on the basis of the 1958 constitution? No, that was only the beginning of the state structure which he wanted to build for himself and, consequently, for France. It was a temporary compromise which the General had tolerated while the Algerian war had been in progress. The 1958 constitution, whatever its restrictions on the rights of parliament might be, did not offer de Gaulle independence

from the traditional political parties, which more and more often meddled in his affairs, acting as self-styled mediators between himself and France. And he wanted to keep them out of that dialogue. Hence the holding of referendums which sometimes seemed completely unjustified by the practical necessities to an outside observer. For example, the question of Algeria's self-determination was twice made the issue of a referendum. De Gaulle used them to avoid the parties' interference in his relations with the electorate. The extraordinary powers after the "week of the barricades", the invoking of Article 16 of the constitution in connection with the generals' mutiny—all of these were also stages in de Gaulle's persistent movement towards his ideal of a state structure in which the president would act as an absolute monarch. The General wanted to create a special type of state, unprecedented in France, which would combine the elements of a republic with a purely monarchic basis.

Immediately after the referendum which approved the Evian agreements, de Gaulle replaced his Prime Minister. Debré had been useful as long as his presence served as a means of restraining the discontent of the adherents of "French Algeria". Now all of that receded into history, while Debré's "incommoding" traits remained. A loyal Gaullist, he did not always understand the General and attempted, without result, to exert pressure on him, becoming an annoying encumbrance. De Gaulle saw no need for continuing that situation.

In April 1962, the President chose Georges Pompidou as candidate for premiership — the man who had been his director of the cabinet in the critical period of the formation of the Fifth Republic. Later Pompidou returned to his duties as Director General of the Rothschild bank but kept up his personal contacts with the General. The President and Mme de Gaulle were private guests at Pompidou's flat in 1960 — an honour which de Gaulle accorded almost no one! Pompidou had been de Gaulle's trusted man in establishing secret contacts with the F.L.N. Now, this former teacher of philology, currently a financial manager in a private bank, formally unconnected with any political party and very little known by the public, was promoted to a state office second in importance in the Republic.

The National Assembly approved Pompidou's declaration as future head of government by 259 votes. On January 8, 1959, Debré was voted in by 453 votes. This difference was due not so much to the new Premier's personality as to changes in the internal political situation. The war in Algeria, which had had a restraining influence on the growth of opposition tendencies, was over. Many trends in de Gaulle's external and internal politics had long excited discontent. De Gaulle's personal power,

with his neglect for his own constitution, gave rise to alarm. And now the country faced another and radical strengthening of that power. Immediately after the cessation of the war, de Gaulle brought up the need for changing the procedure of the presidential elections in such a way that the whole of the electorate might vote for him and not just 80,000 electors. The replacement of indirect voting by direct one, which was seemingly democratic in nature, signified in actual fact further personalisation of the regime. It immediately became clear that these plans would encounter resistance by the political parties. De Gaulle therefore hesitated, and only the attempt on his life in Petit-Clamart stirred him to action.

The warning voices of the opponents of the constitutional reform were drowned in the sound of the assassins' shooting. De Gaulle decided that the political situation was favourable for introducing the reform. The new referendum would express the people's indignation at the attempt on the President's life. Inasmuch as there was such a tangible threat of de Gaulle's disappearance, the time was ripe to choose his successor. All of that would lend the referendum an aura of drama, when feeling would be the main factor, including the still warm gratitude to de Gaulle for ending the war. The General knew that all the parties, except the U.N.R., would rebel against his intentions. But one could hardly expect the circumstances to become any more favourable in the future: he had to put to good use the emotional shock produced by the Petit-Clamart shooting.

Any other French politician would certainly have tried to delay the inevitable clash with the parties, trying first to consolidate his positions and avoiding the conflict entirely, if possible. It was not so with de Gaulle. He was quite capable of waiting long and patiently, but often preferred to hit out first. We might recall his tactics from the times of his struggle for a professional army. He then proposed a preventive lightning strike by armoured units, instead of sitting it out behind the "Maginot Line". He now acted in the same spirit of offensive warfare in the field of politics.

"After the Algerian affair," said de Gaulle, "the parties want to get my hide. Well, I shall take the offensive." By changing the method of electing the President, the General would strike the weapon out of the enemy's hand. The overwhelming majority of the 80,000 electors represented the political parties which became more and more hostile to him. There were also other considerations: for instance, the share of women among the electors was only two per cent, while their proportion among the voters was 57 per cent. And experience had shown that the women voted for de Gaulle much more willingly than men, considering him to

be the embodiment of "order" and "stability"—and a pious Catholic besides.

A president elected by the whole population would at once rise above parliament, for each deputy represents only a small constituency, while he alone would represent the whole country, becoming the people's sovereignty incarnate. De Gaulle said that for nearly a century Republican France had been a "body without a head". The president would become that head. In his private conversations, as distinct from his official speeches, he did not conceal the monarchist essence of his designs. "The President of the Republic must be monarchic in character," he said. "The French need an elective monarchy, and not a hereditary one by divine right. I exercise monarchy in the name of France." In the end, the General proved to be a worthy son of his father Henri de Gaulle, who called himself a "longing monarchist". The son decided to be a triumphant monarchist. He acted in the teeth of all the French Republican traditions, the spirit of radicalism, criticism, and negation permeating French culture. He acted in accordance with a different tradition which reflected the reactionary aspect of that culture, being inspired by the modernised ideas of such reactionaries as Joseph de Maistre or Charles Maurras. He tried to impose a state structure condemned already in the 18th century on France in the middle of the 20th. Maurice Duverger, Professor of Jurisprudence, wrote that electing the president by direct vote was "the same as anointment at Reims under ancient monarchy".

Several days after the Petit-Clamart assassination attempt, de Gaulle announced his decision to his government, plunging the ministers in a distressing state of puzzlement, confusion and fear for the destiny of the Fifth Republic. Though only one of the ministers tendered his resignation, almost all of them tried to talk the President out of a dangerous plan. Prime Minister Pompidou, his predecessor Debré, the Constitutional Council and its chairman Léon Noël, ministers, chairmen of both chambers of parliament, high-ranking officials at the Elysée — all of them, with varying degrees of insistence and firmness, tried to keep de Gaulle from this dangerous sliding towards the brink of an abyss. The political parties, needless to say, greeted de Gaulle's plan with a chorus of indignant cries: "A plebiscite! A coup d'état! No to absolute monarchy!" The traditional bourgeois parties organised a so-called "cartel of the nays". True, this picture of "Republican anger" did not at all reveal a loyalty to the principles of democracy. Former President René Coty, who also condemned de Gaulle, clearly showed the meaning of the bourgeois parties' opposition. He pointed to the danger of a coalition of all the Republican forces, including the Communists. That was

again the old ineradicable fear of the ghost of the Popular Front.

Nearly all the members of the government had hoped that the troubles caused by the war in Algeria would be followed by a period of stability and détente. Those hopes had proved futile, for General de Gaulle was a man continually tormented by untamed demons of action.

It was probably those demons that made the General, who proudly stated in January 1960 that he "had embodied legality for twenty years", violate the constitution without hesitation. Despite the basic law which required obligatory approval of any revision of the constitution by the National Assembly and the Senate, de Gaulle put the project for a reform directly to a referendum. His reply to the indignant protests was that the interests of France and the state were above any law. He contemptuously accused the champions of the constitution of "legal fetishism". This cavalier attitude produced an especially shocking impression in France, rightly called the most "legal" country in the world. The typically French consciousness is imbued with the spirit of legality deeply rooted in the norms of Roman law and Napoleon's Civil Code. The basic legislative norms are usually regarded by the French as a kind of eternal values. And de Gaulle disdainfully said of them: "We know ... the value of these constitutions! We have had seventeen of them in the past one hundred and fifty years, and the nature of things is stronger than the constitutional texts."

On October 3, the National Assembly began to discuss the project of the reform. The attacks against it were led by Paul Reynaud, that very Paul Reynaud who had once supported Colonel de Gaulle in his struggle for armour and now headed the Right-wing party of the Independents. The leaders of all the other parties, except the U.N.R., condemned the reform and introduced a resolution of censure. At dawn of October 5, the resolution of no confidence was passed by 280 votes out of 480, after a debate that was nearly unprecedented in its ferocity. For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, the government was overthrown. On the following day, Pompidou handed in to de Gaulle the statement of the government's resignation, and the President decided to dissolve the National Assembly. On October 28, the referendum was to be held, and then the next elections.

The struggle for votes began. De Gaulle spoke several times on the radio and TV. His opponents launched a counteroffensive. They had quite a few convincing arguments and instruments of fighting. Of the 12 Parisian daily political newspapers, only one gave de Gaulle unqualified support, two were neutral, two others expressed certain reservations, and the other seven were categorically against the reform.

Before the voting, de Gaulle told his closest associates that unless he was supported by more than half of the French people, he would resign: "I would not be able to remain at the head of the state. I would not be able to take important decisions." He fervently hoped to get 70 per cent of the votes. But only 62 per cent of those who took part in the voting replied "yes", which represented only 46 per cent of the electorate. The referendum indicated a sharp decrease in de Gaulle's influence, although formally it was a success. "We ran into more powerful forces than we had thought," the General stated gloomily. "The French are cows," he repeated the words which always accompanied his political failures. "This country has shown that it is incapable of discipline." Yet, after thinking it all over he did not leave, though he was stung to the quick by the "ingratitude of the French".

Now he pinned his hopes on the elections to the new National Assembly scheduled for November 18-25. He had to fight tenaciously under conditions sharply differing from those that had prevailed four years before, when his name had been the flag of different bourgeois political trends. His position now was reminiscent of his role at the head of the R.P.F. De Gaulle underlined that point himself, speaking officially for the first time in support of the U.N.R. candidates against all the other parties. On November 7 he resolutely condemned them, declaring them to be representatives of "private interests" opposing those of the nation. He called on the voters to support those who had said yes at the recent referendum, that is, the U.N.R. candidates, who thus openly became the government's official candidates.

The results of the elections brought compensation for the referendum that had indicated an apparent decline in his influence. The Gaullist U.N.R. Party consolidated its positions in parliament. For the first time in France's parliamentary history, a solid uniform majority came into being. Instead of the 165 seats it had previously, the U.N.R. got 233. Besides, 35 Independents joined that majority. The rest of the parties had only 197 seats. Yet these figures tended to conceal certain other, much more significant indices. The fact is that the U.N.R. had won only 40.5 per cent of the vote, and the rest of the parties, 44.7. If a just proportional system of elections had been in effect, the U.N.R. would only have had 148 seats, not 233. The success of the Gaullist party was due to splits in the Right-wing conservative Independent Party and the M.R.P., who lost more than 100 seats to the U.N.R. The main point was, though, that de Gaulle had had to sacrifice a great deal of his prestige for the sake of the U.N.R. victory. After he had openly supported the U.N.R. candidates, it became much more difficult for him to claim to be the voice expressing the nation's common will. He ceased to be an arbiter,

becoming merely a leader of one of the political parties, and a Rightist conservative party at that, as the U.N.R. had been voted for by those who usually gave their votes to Right-wingers. Of course, de Gaulle got an obedient majority that no one had had in France since Louis XVIII's "peerless chamber". But France itself and the people of France were moving away from him. He had emerged triumphant from a crisis of his own making, but it was clear that it was merely a respite due to the disunity in the opposition camp.

For the most important forces of that opposition, the elections had proved an obvious advance. The Communist Party had polled more than four million votes and surpassed the 1958 mark. The number of its deputies rose from 10 to 41. The Socialists' positions were also improved. A particularly significant phenomenon was the partial unity of action of the Socialists and the Communists during the second round of the elections. That fact opened up extremely alarming perspectives for the Gaullist monarchic republic.

In any case, the General was satisfied with the results of the year 1962, and in his New Year appeal to the French people he stressed two most important attainments: peace in Algeria and a strengthening of the state institutions. True, he still did not believe them to be ideal and continued to work towards further consolidation of his personal power. The French lawyers asserted that the Fifth Republic had, in fact, three constitutions, not one: the 1958 compromise, the 1962 constitution, the emergence of which has just been described, and, finally, the constitution which was practically implemented after de Gaulle's speech on January 31, 1964. In the first two cases, a referendum was held, while in the third the General deemed it sufficient merely to present his views on the state while answering a question during a press conference. De Gaulle said that the constitution, "that is a state of the mind, of the institutions, and practice". And then, as if assuming the crown of an absolute monarch, he said: "One must evidently agree that the indivisible authority of the state is conferred entirely on the President by the people who have elected him, and that there is no other authority, ministerial, civil, military, or judiciary, which would not be conferred and maintained by him."

De Gaulle thus justified the restrictions on the power, role, and significance of all the state institutions of the Republic without exception: "Our new institutions answer the requirements of the epoch as well as the nature of the French people, and that which the people themselves actually hope for."

And how did he learn of the people's desires and aspirations? He always contemptuously rejected the demands of the political

parties and trade unions. In his view, they had no claim at all to represent any strata of the population. He thought still less of the newspapers. "During the past 25 years," he said, "most French and foreign newspapers continually refused to support me." That was why they had no authority at all in his eyes.

The General preferred direct contacts with the crowd to all the customary means of communication with the people. But "the voice of the crowd" only deserved his attention when it was enthusiastic and approving, of course. General de Gaulle regularly went touring the provinces. In the ten years since his return to power, he undertook 38 such trips, during which he visited nearly all of the French departments, appearing not only in the major centres but also in little villages. He said that it was the "only means of communicating with the living forces of the country". In the autumn of 1965 de Gaulle said that in the previous six years he had actually met, face-to-face, some 15 millions of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, had visited 25,000 communities, answered the welcoming speeches of 400 municipal councillors, made 600 speeches before crowds and "had shaken innumerable hands". On his return to the Elysée after one such trip, he said: "It is so fine to feel the bracing touch of reality. Reality, that is those peasants. One always forgets that there are nine provincials in ten Frenchmen. Nine Frenchmen out of ten live tranquilly, thinking of their labour and their simple joys. If one Frenchman runs like a madman from one metro station to another, and fusses all day long, that is no reason for going mad in one's own turn."

What did it look like in practice, this "immersion in the crowd", as de Gaulle put it? What was the nature of his links with the people, what did the President get out of it concretely and what did he give his compatriots? Ignoring all warnings of the secret service, which feared O.A.S. assassins, he stepped out of his car and went right into the crowd. He extended hands to everyone, embraced everyone, and permitted ecstatic ladies to throw themselves upon him. Numerous photographs record scenes of that sort. "Let these children come to me," he would say. "Later, they will be able to say, 'I have seen General de Gaulle.'" All of this was somewhat reminiscent of the medieval custom of the king touching the sick and maimed to effect miraculous healing. Indeed, it was as if a kind king met his good people! He readily spoke to the simple people and listened to them himself. These conversations are striking in their banality.

Here are some typical fragments from such conversations of de Gaulle, which appeared in the newspapers. In Dordogne, he said: "I passed these parts before 1914. In those times, there were mules, goats, and oxen here. Today, there are cars, tractors, and cows. That proves that we are on the proper path." At the

Creusot plant he asked a worker running a huge machine: "And you command all this?" He added, "I have never seen anything like it." On coming to a town famous for its lace, he exclaimed: "Long live Caudry! Long live the Republic! Long live lace!" At Fécamp: "I greet Fécamp, a seaport, which expects to remain a seaport and will remain it." In Lyons: "Lyons is today more Lyonesque than ever." At Angers: "What about the cattle?" "Fine, my General, really fine." "Very good, very good. And the roads?" "They are bad, my General, the village is isolated." "But you are on the right road. I see that you have fine children in this village." And here is yet another such dialogue published in *L'Express*: "Yes, one moves a lot. That is something that I bear in mind. And what about water? Have all your villages water? Good. Have you springs? I mean, good springs? Good. That is important. Ah! And electricity? You have it? How is it going? Good, good... Do you use the power? More and more... That is important. And your trade unions? Good... You have several of them? And don't they argue a bit among themselves? Ah! ... And your schools? You want to keep them? I take it into account. So that the young people need not leave... I know that, too. You are rustics, and it is evident that you have the cares of rural dwellers. You have children, plenty of children, marvellous children, and you would like to know what will become of them..."

These primitive patterns, this exchange of remarks stripped to the bare essentials are not de Gaulle jokes, of which there were uncouth numbers. He was convinced in his mind that one had to speak in precisely that way to the people. Once, de Gaulle lectured one of his ministers: "You see, it is a special language that one must speak, the language that one speaks to the children: France will be France, Europe will be Europe." He spoke of the need for "clear sentences, easily comprehensible to a crowd assembled in a square". He once said to his Interior Minister: "It must evidently be boring for you to hear me repeat the same things, always. What would you? The people expect it. If I spoke in a different language, they would be completely disconcerted."

Of course, there is a grain of truth in de Gaulle's arguments, in terms of pure didactics. The real question was, in what way precisely did it help him to feel the aspirations of the people, to understand the social and political tendencies? There was clearly something of the caricature in the "democracy of shaking hands", although it would be wrong to suspect the General of petty charlatanry and conscious mountebanking. His deeds and words were prompted by the sincere belief that it was in that way that he served France, personified it, and expressed the will of the people. Self-induced blindness predetermined by the social, caste limitations, can only be noticed from a certain distance.

He himself was unable to understand that "immersion in the crowd" gave merely an illusion of being close to the people. And from a distance it was perfectly obvious that he was far from the people, that instinctively and innately he believed the people to be a crowd of silly children incapable of seeing where their interests lay. Significantly, he was said to have stated once: "When I want to know what France thinks, I ask myself!"

True, in his official speeches de Gaulle indignantly refuted the suspicions that the only voice that he listened to was his own inner voice. At the press conference of September 9, 1965, the General asserted: "But, if anyone wants to say that the President is isolated from everybody and everything and that, when he wants to act, he does not listen to anyone but himself, they ignore the evidence." De Gaulle then drew a striking picture of his activities: "The head of state has conferred 302 times with the Council of Ministers, 420 times with restricted interministerial councils, at his office he has received the Prime Minister 605 times; the chairmen of the Assemblies, 78 times; one or the other of the members of the government, nearly 2,000 times; the chairmen or representatives of parliamentary committees or groups, more than 100 times; the principal functionaries, experts, trade union leaders, about 1,500 times, to say nothing of the letters, memos, reports sent to him by one or the other of responsible officials, and of the study of dossiers."

To this should be added a great many duties in the field of foreign policy, which was an area of de Gaulle's special concern, endless receptions of ambassadors, negotiations, frequent tours abroad, meetings with high foreign dignitaries, and a great deal else. In that same period, that is, before September 1965, de Gaulle had spoken 30 times on the radio and TV, conducted 12 press conferences, and made 31 speeches. Of course, any state leader in these days carries an enormous physical and psychological load. But de Gaulle created an extraordinarily centralised system, in which everything was focused on his personality and all decisions were made by himself, so one cannot but be amazed at the fantastic capacity for work in this man who was past seventy and whose health was not all that good at all. Apart from his deteriorating eyesight, he also suffered from other typical complaints of old age. In 1964, he had a prostate gland operation. Two weeks later he began working again at his usual pace, measured but strenuous. But was that reasonable? The huge pyramid of the state stood upside down, poised on its apex! Could one single person cope with an infinity of tasks, could he perceive and process such an immense amount of information in the present epoch with all its complexities? That was clearly impossible, and de Gaulle therefore had an increasingly deformed

and fragmented conception of the life around him. He simply imposed his old, long-set system of views and conceptions on the rapidly changing reality, whose important aspects often escaped his vision. The destiny, in which the General had such profound faith, brought him, in the nature of things, surprises that were extremely unpleasant for him. That was how his "Contract with France" was broken in 1965, a fact which he would only realise, finally and clearly, four years later, not long before his death.

The political circles and the press began discussing the prospects of the presidential elections some two years before 1965, the year they were scheduled to take place. Would de Gaulle announce his candidacy for a second seven-year term? On the eve of the 1962 referendum, he let it be understood that he would not do so. But could one predict the General's actions? Already at the beginning of 1964, the Socialist Gaston Defferre was nominated as a candidate and began his campaign. Soon after, the Radical Senator André Cornu also announced his claim to the presidency. The press reported that Prime Minister Georges Pompidou had similar plans, in case the General decided to go. At that time the book by M. Bromberger appeared entitled *The Secret Destiny of Georges Pompidou (Le destin secret de Georges Pompidou)*, which pictured him as a "dauphin".

General de Gaulle kept silence, while in the home circle he often complained of being tired. The words of Mme de Gaulle became generally known: "The true friends of the General must advise him not to run [for the presidency]". But at the last moment de Gaulle made up his mind to do so. Pompidou said that he himself had learnt of the General's intention only several hours before the official statement announcing his candidacy for re-election. The General did not believe his mission to have been fulfilled: he was then at the very beginning of a far-reaching foreign policy and intended to do a great deal yet to consolidate the authority, independence, and greatness of France.

Although Defferre and Cornu had fallen through as candidates, the General had five rivals. One of them was a minor manufacturer Marcel Barbu with a very vague programme of a "fighter against bureaucracy"; another, Pierre Marcellhac, a typical bourgeois conspicuous mostly for his height (201 cm, that is, nine centimetres taller than de Gaulle); and Tixier-Vignancour, close in spirit to the men of the former O.A.S. Of greater significance was the candidacy of Jean Lecanuet, chairman of the M.R.P., who advocated loyalty to the Atlantic alliance and opposed de Gaulle's independent foreign policy. He enjoyed the support of influential circles of the bourgeoisie. However, his most serious rival proved to be the candidate of the Socialists, Communists, and other Left-wing groups, François Mitterrand. He proposed

a progressive programme of replacing personal power by the republic of citizens.

At first, de Gaulle did not expect any fierce fighting during the elections. As he began the campaign with a speech on the radio on November 4, he did not even use up the time allotted to him as candidate. But his speech was incisive enough: "If voluntary and massive support of citizens keeps me in my position, the future of the new Republic will be decidedly assured. If not, no one can doubt that it will immediately collapse and that France will be plunged — only this time without the possibility of a remedy — into a confusion of the state much more disastrous than it previously knew."

Even before the first round of the elections the General realised what a dangerous opponent Mitterrand was, and he intensified his activity. He decided to make another speech on the radio and TV. But it was only after December 5, after the first round of voting, that the campaign assumed a really dramatic quality. It was the first time de Gaulle did not win a majority! Only 43.7 per cent of the votes were cast for him. He lost two and a half million votes compared with the 1962 referendum.

As for François Mitterrand, he won 32.2 per cent. The union of the Left showed striking efficiency. In 24 departments, Mitterrand left de Gaulle behind.

"A wave of sadness engulfed me," the General later remembered. Yes, it seemed that he would soon be left alone against everybody. The bourgeoisie again refused to follow him. Jean Charlot, a great specialist on Gaullism, pointed out: "In December 1965, most French businessmen preferred Pinay or Lecanuet to de Gaulle." And what about the Left? It had seemed that the Communist Party was thoroughly isolated, and its split with the Socialists was insurmountable. And suddenly there was this joint candidate of the Left and mass voting for Mitterrand! The people, the working people were abandoning de Gaulle — that was the main fact, surprising, for the time being, to him and to many others. And it happened at a time when the feeling of gratitude for liquidating the Algerian crisis was alive, while his independent foreign policy was widely approved of. And even under those conditions the voters of the Left who had previously supported de Gaulle (and their number had sometimes reached the three million mark) turned away from him. Undoubtedly that was the beginning of the end.

It took de Gaulle two days of meditation to decide that he would remain a candidate in the second round as well. He secluded himself from everyone and received no one. Jean-Raymond Tournoux thus describes those days: "He who has ears at the Elysée hears a man pacing his office or his apartments. The Pre-

sident of the Republic walks about. He comes and goes. He takes hundreds of paces, then takes them again. His sombre reflections are his only companions. From the outside, the palace offers its most quiet aspect. Within, the silence becomes oppressive for some. A man in a crisis paces to and fro in his room. A prey to a drama of conscience, de Gaulle asks himself the most serious question since the end of the war in Algeria: was he right or wrong in soliciting a second seven-year term? He regrets his decision. Then he changes his mind: the battle will be fought to the end."

A "general mobilisation" of Gaullists then began. Pompidou conferred with the deputies of the governmental majority, gave them their instructions, and they rushed to their constituencies. Their instructions were: no pinpricks — bulldozer tactics. All reserves were thrown into battle: even the authoress Françoise Sagan canvassed for de Gaulle. But the campaign was headed by the General himself, who employed his invariable weapon, the word. The impression was that the reverses of the first round revived and even rejuvenated the President. In place of cold threats, he now used the tactics of persuasion. On the eve of the voting he said: "The new Republic has its president. That is me, such as I am. I am not saying that I am perfect or that I am not my age. I do not claim to know all or to be omnipotent. I know, better than anyone else, that I must have successors and that the nation must choose them so that they should follow the same line." He reminded his audience of the successes he had attained together with the French people: "With all of you who are the French people, I could give tomorrow a new impulse to our affairs ... that is why I am ready to assume again the highest office, that is to say, the greatest duty."

There were only two candidates during the second round of voting, on December 19. De Gaulle was elected President by a majority of 54.5 per cent. It would have been an outstanding achievement for any other candidate, but not for de Gaulle, who always wanted nothing less than a clear, firm majority and the confidence of the whole nation. In the U.S.A., of course, presidencies have been won with an even smaller margin, but that could not be a consolation, for the political conditions of the two nations were completely different. De Gaulle, who had always been convinced that he could have no rivals at all in France, was amazed at the success of his principal competitor: Mitterrand, the candidate of the Left forces, had won 44.8 votes.

De Gaulle was acutely conscious of his half-defeat at the presidential elections. When he gave the first press conference after the elections on February 21, 1966, the common impression of the journalists gathered at the Elysée hall of state was, "de Gaulle is no longer the man he was in 1958". The pomp and cir-

cumstance with which the press conference was conducted were the same as ever. De Gaulle, slightly made up and therefore looking strangely youthful, appeared on the dais in the blinding spotlight before the TV cameras; there was a series of flashbulb explosions, he sat down in an armchair behind a small desk with the microphones on it, and sternly looked at the enormous hall glittering with gilt and the crystal of the chandeliers, where about a thousand journalists were crammed. On his right, though not on the dais but much lower, where they belonged, sat all the members of the "royal house" headed by the Prime Minister. As always, it was, as *Le Monde's* observer Viansson-Ponté put it, "a High Mass for the regime, a splendid ceremony surrounded by the entire pomp of a celebration day with church bells ringing!"

But the general tone of everything that happened there was somehow changed. Louis Luc, *L'Humanité's* correspondent, wrote on the following day: "De Gaulle, on the defensive, is much less arrogant, much less sure of himself, and lets his tiredness show through..." The General summed up the results of the elections, emphasising his success by an interesting comparison: he pointed out that the 45 per cent of the votes received in the first round was more than his supporters had won at the parliamentary elections of 1951, 1956, 1958 and 1962. But this comparison merely stressed the decline of his influence. He therefore did not make the much more justifiable comparison with the 1958 referendum, where he got 80 per cent of the vote. Besides, the President again admitted that he was not the incarnation of the whole nation's unity but merely the leader of a single Right-wing party, though a major one. Defeat could not be presented as a victory even with his extraordinary skill of well-calculated and spectacular speeches.

In the second volume of his *Memoirs of Hope (Mémoires d'espoir)*, for which de Gaulle managed to write only two chapters, he says that "in the year of grace 1962, the renovation of France flourished", but afterwards he had to contend with failure to understand him and animosity. "But how could I fail to see," writes de Gaulle with bitterness, "that what is salutary for a nation is sure to be blamed by the public opinion and to involve losses during elections?" In his last private conversations at the end of 1969 and the beginning of 1970, de Gaulle would sadly speak of the fact that during the 1965 elections he felt there was a "breach of his contract with France". As always, he spoke of France, not the French, and that is symptomatic, for it helps to understand the significance of his political reverses.

In this case, the main reason for the setbacks was his reactionary, conservative economic and social policy, because of which de Gaulle appeared, in the eyes of the French people, as a representative of the ruling class, the man who expressed the dictator-

ship of the big business circles, rather than as the leader of the whole nation uniting it and embodying its highest interests, which seemed to be his subjective goal. General de Gaulle despised the base amoral motives of the bourgeoisie, the eternal profit chasing, primitive mercenary spirit, bigotry and narrow-mindedness. At the decisive stages of his career he naturally turned out to be lonely and isolated from the social class to which he was tied by kinship but which was unable to share the ideas compelling him to act in the name of France's "eternal" interests. Still, he remained a man of that class despite everything, though he served it by frequently acting against its desires and aspirations. François Mauriac, who placed de Gaulle among the "heroes and saints" who built France, and who compared him in full earnest to the Messiah, nevertheless made curious remarks in his book about de Gaulle on the relations between the General and the bourgeoisie. "That man," wrote Mauriac, "indifferent to money and despising money, adapted himself to the capitalist system; expressing no dislike for those who embodied it, he used them and made them serve him."

In actual fact, the capitalist system also used de Gaulle and made him serve itself. This "general of the Maurras mould", as François Mauriac described him, followed Charles Maurras in preferring politics to economy, which had a subordinate and secondary position in his view. True, he came to power in 1958 fully intending to put an end to the inflation, to an adverse balance of payments, and to reliance on foreign financial aid, since all of it undermined France's national independence, condemning it to humiliation. He was not, of course, against raising the living standards of the French and their material prosperity, like a good regimental commander who sees to it that his soldiers are well fed, for the fighting efficiency of the regiment depends on it. Yet for him it was all secondary, and could not be mentioned in the same breath as ensuring the might of the state, which alone could justify any sacrifices. Therefore he paid no attention to the numerous posters expressing the demands of urban and rural working people, such as "Cash down, Charles!"; which he could see from his car travelling along France's roads.

At his press conference on February 21, 1966, General de Gaulle said: "Since 1958, the orientation of France's economic, social and financial policy never changed." That was exactly how it was. From the very beginning de Gaulle reserved for himself certain areas — foreign policy, Algeria, the colonies and the armed forces — leaving all the other spheres of state administration to the competence of his ministers. Premier Debré was said to have grumbled once, in a conversation with the General: "Algeria, that is you. The price of milk, that is me." The General listened

to him and then, without telling him a word, had the price of milk raised. But that was an exceptional case. Ordinarily, it was all quite different. The "commissariat" was run by "able men". Naturally, in the economy the most "able" men are those for whom the whole meaning of life is profit chasing. It is not surprising, then, that economy and finances were run by men from the world of big money, industrialists and bankers — Pinay, Baumgartner and others like them. In general, men directly representing the financial oligarchy got an access to power under de Gaulle as easily as never before. Previously, they had to fight for a seat in parliament and then be tested in parliamentary debate, where Leftist deputies did not quite favour industrialists and bankers. The new state system eliminated all those obstacles.

"The policy conducted since 1958 and especially since 1962," wrote former Premier Mendès-France, "was to hand over the levers of administration that had been in the hands of the state and are the necessary levers of planning, especially the most important lever, financial one, to private entrepreneurs."

It all began back in September 1958, when de Gaulle set up a committee of experts to work out his economic policy, headed by Jacques Rueff, former financial adviser of Poincaré and Laval. The committee consisted entirely of representatives of banks and trusts. They prepared a series of governmental decrees promulgated in December 1958. In accordance with de Gaulle's plans, the decrees were aimed at consolidating France's economic independence and its competitiveness in the world markets. The new, "heavy" franc was issued, equalling 100 old francs. Devaluation, that is, decreasing the value of the franc with regard to foreign currencies, facilitated the growth of French exports. The foreign deficit decreased, and reserves of gold grew, whereas in 1958 they were practically non-existent. In 1963, they equalled \$4.5 thousand million. The franc became one of the "hardest" currencies. The industrial upsurge consolidated France's economic positions. Industrialists were given numerous privileges, and their profits grew steeply. By the December 1965 presidential elections, production had grown by 43 per cent, and exports, by 88 per cent.

But at what price and at whose expense was all of this achieved? Subsidies that had checked the growth of the prices of consumer goods were abolished; the gas, electricity, transport, postal service, and other tariffs were raised. Welfare benefits and pensions were reduced. The system of keeping up the prices of farmers' products was eliminated. Taxes rose. In short, the economic policy of the Fifth Republic was to make the poor pay for everything. The gap between the highest and the lowest income brackets grew. In Sweden, the former exceeded the latter by a factor of 17, while in France, by a factor of 74. Prices in France grew faster than

in the U.S.A., the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain and Belgium. Only Italy was ahead. In the ten years of the Fifth Republic, prices rose by 40 per cent.

The situation was especially scandalous in housing. With 15 million badly needing some kind of habitation, not more than 370,000 dwellings were built each year. True, in Paris alone some 10,000 fine flats stood empty, but they were intended for the rich and cost a fortune. To get a cheap municipal flat, one had to wait one's turn for years and years. France remained a country with the highest cost of living in Western Europe. Nothing was done to check profiteering and the bourgeoisie's abuses. Luxury and poverty existed side by side. Industrial production grew, labour productivity and, consequently, exploitation increased, while wage increases barely covered the rise in prices and inflation.

The economic policy aimed at production efficiency, profitability and competitiveness, was a burden not only to the wage-earning and salaried workers. Rapid concentration of production ruined great numbers of small owners, particularly farmers. The government's plans envisaged the liquidation of 800,000 farms. Peasant unrest enveloped dozens of departments, with farmers using their agricultural machines to block the country's roads.

The working class, after a short pause at the beginning of the Fifth Republic's existence, started a vigorous fight against the reactionary social policy of the new regime. In the summer of 1959, industrial unrest swelled in all the branches of the economy. The government in the person of the Premier, Michel Debré, responded by declaring, "Power does not retreat!", and took up a most implacable position. It issued the decree on "requisitioning", that is, compulsory return of strikers to their work. But the trade unions resorted to other varied forms of struggle. In 1961, the strike movement was three times as strong as in 1959. It especially grew in 1963. The miners' general strike caused an unprecedented trial of strength between the working class and the authoritarian regime. De Gaulle personally signed the decree on "requisition". The strikers refused to obey it. Workers in other industries also struck in solidarity. The government had to retreat and begin negotiations with the trade unions. It was no accident that the social conflict in the spring of 1963 proved to be the lowest point in the decline of de Gaulle's prestige. It was the first time that he interfered in a class fight directly, and he suffered a defeat. Later, he would have to retreat on more than one occasion as the working class charged. It was in this area that de Gaulle ran into greatest difficulties and suffered obvious defeats. In questions of social policy, this superb realist showed a nearly complete failure to understand reality. Class struggle seemed to him an extremely dangerous but incomprehensible phenomenon.

He said that the concept of class struggle "contradicted something that lay especially deep in his consciousness", that is, the principle of the unity of the nation. He could not understand the objectively inevitable nature of class conflicts in bourgeois society. Inasmuch as it was the workers who, protecting their rights, were compelled to be the actively attacking side in the social clashes, they naturally appeared to him as the guilty party in disrupting the nation's unity and weakening it. So he inevitably found himself on the side of the bourgeoisie, despite his claims to be an impartial arbiter, for the bourgeoisie was in favour of "law and order". He had to interfere continually in the economic and social policy, for its conduct endangered all his initiatives in the internal and foreign affairs. In 1963, the growth of prices and inflation again threatened to undermine the country's position on the international scene.

On August 13, 1963, right at the height of the vacation season, de Gaulle convened a sitting of the Council of Ministers. Banging his fist on the table, he said: "The government does nothing to stop the increase in prices. Inflation is in full swing. A great country cannot exist without a stable currency. Either we save the franc or we shall all be kicked out. I give you fifteen days to take drastic measure." In September, a plan for what was called "stabilisation" was evolved: the government promised not to permit any further growth in prices while the trade unions had to give up their demands for higher wages. In this way it was intended to check inflation. In an interview to *Paris-Match*, Prime Minister Pompidou, expressing the General's viewpoint, made this comment on the plan: "I personally do not hold the view that the main task of the present regime and of General de Gaulle's activity is to bring all Frenchmen prosperity. In my view, the prime task is to restore their dignity." He then frankly said that each Frenchman would have to agree to "certain limitations on his personal well-being". The "stabilisation" plan resulted in wage freezes and a new deterioration in the working people's living standards. After the December 1965 presidential elections, all the commentators thus explained the weakening of the President's positions: "the stabilisation plan suffered the greatest defeat in the election campaign".

After the presidential elections de Gaulle's economic and social policy was directed by another and incomparably more comprehensive and important state plan covering the whole of the economy. As a matter of fact, directly after the war France became a capitalist country with the highest level of planning. Before de Gaulle came to power, three "plans of modernisation and equipment" had been carried into effect. But they had been limited in character and were a programme of orientation rather

than a real plan. Under de Gaulle the situation changed, and the plan, which was now called the "plan of economic and social development", became the basis of the state's entire economic policy. It was now debated and approved by parliament. De Gaulle called the fourth plan (1962-1965) his "ardent duty". That was indeed a plan of economic development, although it was essentially used for coordinating the policy of the state and of the major monopolies to step up concentration. The fifth plan (1965-1970) went even further: it ensured the monopolies' absolute domination of the economy and consolidation of their positions in the fight against foreign competition. General Commissioner for Planning Massé said: "Competitiveness is the prime goal, for it is the key to everything else. The fifth plan will be a plan of great efforts." In January 1966 General de Gaulle said, praising this plan, that it "is in keeping with social justice, as it emphasises the incomes policy". In actual fact, the incomes of capitalists grew rapidly and without any control, while the incomes of the poor became rigidly controlled. The plan involved reduction of consumption, wage freezing, and intentional stepping up of unemployment. In conclusion, de Gaulle made it clear that the social policy would not change to any appreciable extent: "Nature does not make leaps. A young tree must grow without any jerks. Thus new France."

Deep at heart, de Gaulle would have probably liked to make capitalism more just and rational. By his family background and upbringing, he was connected with the bourgeoisie of the north, always inclined towards social reforms as the means of attenuating class struggle. But when it came to practical measures for improving the working people's position, the question arose: how could that be done? He could not bear the thought of reducing, let us say, the enormous sums spent on the programme of nuclear rearmament and creating the so-called "strike force", for the policy of greatness was above all. There could be no question either of touching the profits of big business. Jean Lacouture wrote in his biography of de Gaulle: "The General, ever ready to be brilliant where he is brilliant — in the favourite areas of strategy, diplomacy, history — has a tendency, in other domains, to dodge blows and take in the sails: towards foreign powers he behaves like a Richelieu, towards groups of [capitalist] interests, like a Mazarin."

The presidential elections, however, made de Gaulle think of social reforms in earnest. As a matter of fact, he had talked quite a lot about them before as well. In 1950, as head of the R.P.F., in his speech in the Bois de Boulogne, he condemned class struggle which was "everywhere, on the shop floor, in the fields, at offices, in the street". "It poisons the human relations,"

said de Gaulle, "makes states mad, breaks the unity of nations, foments wars." To all this, he opposed the idea, old as capitalism itself, of an association between labour and capital, which would replace the class struggle between workers and capitalists by their friendly collaboration. Among the many Leftist factions in the Gaullist movement, there emerged a group headed by Louis Vallon and René Capitant, the General's war-time companions, who advocated major social reforms. In 1959 the Democratic Union of Labour (*Union Démocratique du Travail*, or U.D.T.) was formed, which later merged with the main Gaullist party, the U.N.R. In Jean Charlot's opinion, Vallon and Capitant "remain in the Gaullist movement, despite the natural conservatism of its members, only because of their faith in General de Gaulle's revolutionary intentions. They are awaiting a great 'social reform' which the General must impose on his majority, as he once imposed on it the independence of Algeria, invoking the support of the people through a referendum, if need be."

Practically, the "revolutionary" intentions were expressed in the January 1959 decree introducing "interestedness" at enterprises, the participation of the workers in the profits through acquiring shares. This sort of thing was called the "people's capitalism" in the U.S.A.; it was intended to weaken the struggle of the working class for its rights. The real consequences of the decree, which was contemptuously rejected by the trade unions, were insignificant. In March 1965, only 202 enterprises applied the system of "participation". They employed only 104 thousand of workers, that is, less than one per cent of all the working people of the country. However, rapid growth of unrest among the working class disgruntled at the policy of the Fifth Republic compelled the Gaullist reformers to take new action. In May 1965, during the debate in parliament on the law of company taxes, Vallon introduced an amendment about the workers' rights to participate in the profits, which was accepted. It roused no enthusiasm either among the trade unions or among the industrialists. However, after the December 1965 presidential elections de Gaulle expressed his intention, in several of his speeches, to introduce "participation" on a wider scope.

In practical terms, things did not go beyond setting up a special commission consisting mostly of entrepreneurs who took their time working out legislative suggestions suiting the owners' interests only. The "historical" plan for "participation" was merely an object for a rather dull controversy in the newspapers. The monopoly press treated it with obvious scepticism, while the trade unions justly viewed it as demagoguery intended to camouflage the increasingly more reactionary social policy running counter to the people's interests. Continual strikes indicated growing un-

rest among the people. An obvious shift to the Left was taking place.

These were the conditions in which the elections took place on March 5-12, 1967. In view of the unfavourable situation, de Gaulle openly interfered in the election campaign, calling on the electorate to vote for the U.N.R. That was a fresh crude violation of the constitution forbidding the President to take the side of any single party. Again de Gaulle risked his prestige and influence. Despite all this, the U.N.R. won a mere 38 per cent of the vote. That was a new defeat, considering that some 45 per cent had voted for de Gaulle during the first round in December 1965.

The parties of the Left polled one million three hundred thousand votes more than the Gaullists. From that point, de Gaulle's regime had the support of an obvious minority of the country's population. De Gaulle's assessment of the results of the elections is of some interest. During the press conference on May 16, 1967, he said: "Theoretically, the object of the elections has not been the institutions of the Republic. It was not a national referendum. In this respect, it was simply ... 487 local competitions. And yet, the institutions of the Republic were involved." Thus the General admitted the main point, although he tried to belittle the political significance of the elections. He was worried about the future: from now on, he would have no reliable majority in parliament to fall back on.

However, during his May 16 press conference he spoke very little, and cursorily, about the internal political situation, mostly concentrating on foreign policy. Indeed, the General's activity in foreign policy compensated, as it were, for the failure of his economic and social policy. In this area he exercised his political courage and instinctive realism to the best advantage.

"Everything I do," de Gaulle said, "is for the grandeur of France." What did the concept of greatness concretely imply, in his view? A formal position of a great power? But already at the end of the war France had won, largely through de Gaulle's efforts, a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations, along with the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, and China. Or did he mean real power? It has long been accepted in France that that state is a great power which can alone fight a war against any other great power. It would be sheer fantasy to dream of this kind of real might, especially in this nuclear age. What was France, after all, compared with such giants as the U.S.S.R. or the U.S.A.? Of course, France's economic positions after the war had become consolidated, its share of world production had grown, the demographic slump, so much talked of, had ended, and the population of the country had grown to 50 million. France now had quite sizeable gold reserves. However, all of this seemed to be on a rather miniature scale compared to the resources of the two world giants. In a private conversation, de Gaulle once bitterly exclaimed: "Oh, if only I were President of the United States!"

There could be no question of the traditional "greatness of the big guns", based on superiority in material strength. General de Gaulle hoped to restore France's greatness by achieving superior moral authority. "To enjoy international prestige, a country need not be huge," he said. To have that kind of prestige, one must, in his view, be entirely independent, or as independent as possible. Since de Gaulle's character accorded best of all with this tendency, the foreign policy of France had to become his personal policy directed by his will. The spirit of independence and strength of character that were his distinctive traits would serve the greatness of France. "Character," de Gaulle said, "is above all the ability to ignore the abuse and desertion by one's allies." He knew well that he had no rivals in this respect among the contemporary political leaders of the Western world. "Only we can say no to American protection," said he. "Neither the Germans nor the Italians, the Belgians nor the Dutch will say no. We alone can,

and it is our duty to do so." As he saw it, the British had the least aspiration for independence. He never forgot that even Churchill himself had once advised him to bow to the Americans. "Great Britain has weak kings. They still keep up appearances, customs, royal traditions, and British institutions. But none of that counts. Their leaders are inclined towards humiliating self-flagellation." He spoke sarcastically of the most authoritative and prominent leaders of Western Europe: "Whether they admit it or not, whether they are conscious of it or not, all these honourable gentlemen think of nothing but their careers. They do not care a rap for their countries."

As for de Gaulle himself, he could never let France go hang, as others did. Alas, before he came to power, there were those others who did not care a rap for France, and it was, in his view, merely an American satellite. The resolution to put an end to this was the meaning of de Gaulle's foreign policy. The arrogant contempt for his weaker opposite numbers (expressed, of course, only within a narrow circle) could certainly be of little help in implementing his plans. De Gaulle resorted to a whole arsenal of diplomatic devices varying from flattery to blackmail, from persuasion to threats. Subtle calculation, simulation, tenacity, imperturbability and, of course, silence, suddenly erupting into impassioned rhetoric — that is only a very incomplete list of the devices of Gaullist diplomacy. The General was a past master of psychological games. But the main thing that was concealed behind de Gaulle's emotional foreign policy declarations clad in splendid rhetoric was his profound political realism. That was Machiavellism of the highest order. Sentimentality is out of place in politics, what is needed here is sober cynicism: that was the precept he openly taught his colleagues. The General liked to repeat Nietzsche's words that states are "the most cold-blooded of cold-blooded monsters". Once, Couve de Murville spoke of "states friendly towards France" at a government sitting. De Gaulle cut him short: "A state worthy of the name has no friends!"

At first sight, this dictum may appear to be sheer paradox. But its meaning will become clear when we compare it with de Gaulle's sentiments during the war: "Our allies are also our adversaries." "War is against our enemies, peace is against our friends." "Allies are foreigners. Tomorrow they may become enemies." De Gaulle thus took the principle of national independence, the most important of all principles to him, to its natural conclusion.

On coming to power, General de Gaulle began the struggle for the restoration of France's independence — through gradual movement towards granting independence to Algeria! As long as the war lasted, de Gaulle's foreign policy was inevitably hampered

by its direct and indirect consequences. Therefore the solution of the Algerian problem was, in fact, the main expression of his foreign policy during the first years of the Fifth Republic. This policy would attain its full scope only after the Evian agreements. Still, even before 1962, Gaullist diplomacy on all issues proved much more dynamic than the diplomacy of the Fourth Republic. Of special importance were the elements of change in some of its basic principles, although de Gaulle's foreign policy was only just shaping up, which involved much searching, probing, testing of methods, manoeuvring, etc. His foreign policy showed ever more clearly the same traits that distinguished it in 1940-1946. As a matter of fact, he began in 1958 with something that he had vainly tried to achieve during the war, that is, with an attempt to join the exclusive "club of the great".

On September 24, 1958, de Gaulle sent President Eisenhower of the U.S.A. and the British Premier Macmillan a secret memorandum demanding that a system of trilateral consultations within the Atlantic alliance be instituted between France, the U.S.A. and Great Britain for the working out and taking of the most important decisions. Not long before, the Anglo-Saxon powers had taken extremely risky action in the Middle East and the Straits of Formosa. As usual, France had not been consulted on those moves. General de Gaulle writes in his *Memoirs of Hope*: "As I had expected, both addresses gave an evasive reply to my memorandum. Nothing was left to us but action."

In March 1959, General de Gaulle ordered the withdrawal of the French Mediterranean Fleet from the Atlantic alliance command. He then forbade the American forces to keep atomic bombs in France or to construct launching pads on French territory. Air Defence units were soon returned under French command, and a system of control over flights of military planes over France's territory was established. In contravention of previous agreements, de Gaulle refused to hand over to N.A.T.O. commanders the French units returning from North Africa. In short, France's participation in the N.A.T.O. alliance was steadily reduced, and that in a situation where all the governments of the Fourth Republic before de Gaulle's accession to power had regarded the Atlantic alliance as an absolute value, the basis of their entire foreign policy. Any demands of the Americans heading the military bloc had been complied with unquestioningly.

It is easy to imagine what the subject of the talks was between de Gaulle and President Eisenhower, who arrived in Paris in early September 1959. The two generals, formerly companions-in-arms, failed to find a common language, although on the whole Eisenhower found a very amiable reception in Paris. General de Gaulle told a certain American: "I cherish a feeling of warm friend-

ship for General Eisenhower; he is a good and honest man." But then, with a deep sigh, he added: "Men can have friends. Statesmen, never."

Soon after Eisenhower's departure, on September 16, 1959, President de Gaulle visited the Higher Military School. In a speech before the professors and the officers studying there he expounded the new policy in the field of national defence: "The defence of France," he said, "must be French... If a nation like France has to go to war, it must be its own war; its efforts must be its own... Without doubt, our defence can be coordinated in case of need with the defence of another country... But France's defence must be her own, she must defend herself on her own and in her own way."

On de Gaulle's instructions, his speech was published in the information journal of the military department. Antoine Pinay, Minister of Finance, came to a cabinet meeting with the issue of that journal in hand. That former Vichy man had long become a zealous N.A.T.O. adherent. He was convinced that France would be destroyed without American protection. During the cabinet session, Pinay produced the journal and read out de Gaulle's speech. He then addressed the General: "Mr. President, if I have correctly understood you, you have condemned the very principle of N.A.T.O.... Our allies are shocked by your speech... No, we do not have the means to defend ourselves by our own efforts."

The General, who chaired the sitting, inquired contemptuously: "The Minister of Finance takes an interest in foreign policy?" He reminded those present of his memorandum of the previous year and of the measures intended to restore the independence of French national defence. De Gaulle confirmed his resolution to continue that course. Pinay tried to argue, but de Gaulle saw no need to go into the substance of the matter. He rose to his feet and drily said: "Thank you, M. Pinay. Gentlemen, the meeting is adjourned." Thereupon the General left without shaking hands with anyone. The incident was followed by explanations. De Gaulle told his minister: "I do not reproach you for speaking your mind. I reproach you for doing so before the Council of Ministers." Pinay said that he saw it as his duty. De Gaulle reminded him that the irresponsibility of the times of the Fourth Republic was a thing of the past: "I alone determine policy, and on my own responsibility. I alone have the right to decide." In the end, Pinay had to resign in January 1960. The opposition of the main bourgeois parties to the new foreign policy of France became manifest. The Independents, the M.R.P., the Radicals, the Socialists — none of them could conceive of any other policy than submission to Washington. For the time being, de Gaulle had to reckon with that. He still needed support to solve the Algerian problem.

The position of Washington itself on this score was just as serious. The American media kept fiercely denouncing de Gaulle's "dissident" actions. At the beginning of the summer of 1961, President Kennedy came over to Paris. The American was accorded a magnificent reception. The US President and his wife behaved with purely Gallic sophistication and elegance during official ceremonies. General de Gaulle demonstrated American simplicity of manners and the sternness of a *Connétable*. Everything looked splendid. During the official reception, Versailles was so resplendent that even the "sun king", Louis XIV, would have felt envious. But the atmosphere at the talks between de Gaulle and Kennedy only looked the more gloomy and dark. The US President, who had already met the courteous and loyal leaders of the West European countries, found it difficult to strike the appropriate note. In his *Memoirs of Hope*, de Gaulle thus described the meeting: "At present, the Americans are aware of our independent stance and deal directly and especially with us. Nevertheless they cannot conceive at all of their actions no longer being decisive and our actions being separate from theirs. In short, every move Kennedy suggests that I make is a move to be made as part of his actions. What he can expect me to answer is that Paris is certainly disposed to concerted action with Washington, but whatever France does she does it on her own."

The two presidents' discussion were not restricted to the actions of France with regard to N.A.T.O. Paris and Washington now disagreed on many issues of world policy. France had publicly condemned US intervention in the Congo, where it had used the United Nations as a cover for crude interference and for doing away with Lumumba. Kennedy had suggested that France should participate in that affair, but de Gaulle had resolutely refused. There were other acute disagreements as well. Having broken off diplomatic relations with Cuba, the U.S.A. called on France to follow suit. But France kept its embassy in Havana and refused to impose an embargo on trade with Cuba. But the main point of dissent was Vietnam. Kennedy informed de Gaulle that the U.S.A. was preparing a military intervention. He wanted an endorsement of that act, but de Gaulle icily condemned the new venture. He told Kennedy: "For you intervention in that region will be an endless process. From the moment when nations are awakened, no foreign authority, whatever the means at its disposal, has any chance of imposing itself. You will soon find this out for yourselves... I predict that you will get bogged down step by step in a bottomless military and political quagmire, despite the losses and the expenditures you may dispense."

Thus did the old General lecture the young President in 1961, but the lecture would seem a gentle admonition compared to his

subsequent public denunciations of the American venture in Vietnam, in which de Gaulle used his castigating eloquence at full force. The talks ended, as is usual in such cases, in a communiqué consisting of mere phrases intended to conceal the fact that the two presidents had agreed to disagree. Indeed, the Franco-American contradictions would become much more acute in the future, despite their community in the main thing — membership in the imperialist camp. At the height of the Caribbean crisis of evil fame, which brought the world to the brink of war, de Gaulle let Kennedy know that France would be on the side of the U.S.A. Though de Gaulle might go far in conducting an independent policy, France, owing to its social nature, remained tied to the U.S.A. by an organic class affinity.

On his return to the U.S.A., John Kennedy spoke on the radio on June 6 of his European tour. Among other things, he narrated his impressions of the meeting with de Gaulle: "I found General de Gaulle far more interested in our frankly stating our position whether or not it was his own, than in appearing to agree with him when we do not. But he knows full well the true meaning of an alliance. He is after all the only major leader of World War II who still occupies a position of great responsibility. His life has been one of unusual dedication; he is a man of extraordinary personal character, symbolising the new strength and the historic grandeur of France... General de Gaulle could not have been more cordial, and I could not have more confidence in any man."

John Kennedy thus did not conceal his disagreements with de Gaulle, and indirectly admitted the failure of negotiations with him. But at the same time he was full of praise for the General. Could it be that he still hoped to make him more tractable? That does not seem likely. Kennedy was shrewd enough to realise the futility of such ruses in dealing with de Gaulle. It would appear that he had indeed felt sincere respect for the General. In 1963, 15 days before his assassination, Kennedy said in a conversation with the French ambassador: "If I were the President of the French Republic, I would do exactly as General de Gaulle is doing."

As for de Gaulle, he was at first very prejudiced against the young American President and mockingly called him a "curly-headed boy". This attitude may have had its sources in the war years, when de Gaulle took a dislike to John Kennedy's father, then US ambassador in London. De Gaulle said that a millionaire's son could only be a spoiled boy. But already after their meeting in the summer of 1961, and especially afterwards, he expressed quite a different view, saying that he had a high opinion of Kennedy. The General once said of his successor, Johnson: "History for him is still a matter of backroom deals. Kennedy was a man of a different stamp. American politics will probably again be reduced to mere politicking."

De Gaulle looked to Western Europe for a basis of France's independence. Indeed, the heritage left here by the Fourth Republic suited him even less than France's miserable position in N.A.T.O. Earlier, French foreign policy had been mostly oriented towards various forms of the European alliance of the six countries: the Common Market, Euratom, the European Coal and Steel Community. Once, it had been suggested to complement them with a "European army", which de Gaulle had opposed not without success. The organisations already in existence contained supranational elements that threatened the independence of France. Plans for a political community were worked out which would replace the independent national states.

Those were the conditions under which de Gaulle began to fight for transforming "European" organisations into their opposites: he intended to make these dangerous instruments of depriving France of her independence the basis of consolidating her power and influence through creating a political bloc of independent countries under France's leadership. It was true that no other country among The Six showed any inclination to support the Gaullist plan for an "independent European Europe". And yet de Gaulle decided to try and make an ally of a country which seemed to be least suitable for it — West Germany. He took into account that, although the F.R.G. was economically twice as strong as France, it badly needed political support. The aged Chancellor Adenauer had nightmares about a possible relaxation of international tension through an agreement between the Western powers and the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union vigorously pursued that goal, meeting with increasing support of the Western nations' public opinion. Even a remote possibility of concluding the German peace treaty and regulating the problem of West Berlin worried Adenauer. It was this situation that suggested to de Gaulle the idea of making him an ally in the struggle for consolidating France's positions. That was probably the strangest and most ambiguous scheme in the whole history of Gaullist diplomacy.

On September 14, 1958, Chancellor Adenauer came to de Gaulle's residence at Colombey. The conversation lasted three hours. A joint declaration was worked out solemnly announcing the end of the ancient hostility between the two countries. Cooperation between France and the F.R.G., the statement said, was "the basis of any constructive undertaking in Europe". The Colombey meeting produced a sensation. The fact was that de Gaulle's coming to power had caused alarm in West Germany. Its leaders remembered his intention to partition Germany after the end of the war, his fight against the "European army" and generally his nationalistic convictions. And now this dangerous enemy of Germans unexpectedly became a friend! The choice

of the place for the negotiations lent a somewhat intimate character to the meeting. Hence the legend of personal friendship and spiritual affinity between the two leaders, of their feelings of mutual admiration, etc. Everything was much simpler. De Gaulle and Adenauer struck a secret bargain: the General promised not to permit any agreements with the U.S.S.R. on the German question that would be unacceptable to the F.R.G. revenge-seekers, while Adenauer undertook to help de Gaulle in his struggle for the leadership of Western Europe.

Two months passed, and it was de Gaulle's turn to pay a return visit to the Rhine. He urgently needed Adenauer's support to squash the British plan for a "free trade zone", in which it was intended to include the six Common Market countries. It posed a threat to his idea of transforming The Six into a political bloc under French guidance. Adenauer agreed to oppose Great Britain, while de Gaulle promised to support him on the Berlin issue. Three months passed, and a new meeting followed on March 4, 1959, this time in France, at Marly-le-Roi. Adenauer asked for de Gaulle's support in the negotiations on the Soviet proposals to conclude the German peace treaty. De Gaulle promised to help the Chancellor and resolutely supported his proposition at his March 25 press conference. However, at the same press conference he made a sensational statement which came to Bonn as a bolt out of the blue. He was the only Western leader to speak out clearly and unambiguously for the immutability of all of Germany's frontiers. He thereby put paid to the main demand of Adenauer's revenge-seeking programme. De Gaulle's conduct, so unexpected by Adenauer, was completely logical. The General wanted to show his West German "friend" just how dependent the latter was on him. Besides, he did not at all like the idea of being simply Adenauer's mouthpiece. He did not want to risk his prestige by joining the ranks of the most narrow-minded cold-war-mongers. Besides, he never forgot about the Soviet Union, and his policy already at that time envisaged a far-reaching orientation towards the East.

However indignant at de Gaulle's perfidy the Bonn leaders might be, they had to keep grudging silence. In summer 1959, a conference was convened in Geneva of the foreign ministers of the four powers, including the U.S.S.R., to discuss the German issue. Adenauer placed all his hopes on the French representative. The latter did not let him down: no decisions were taken. And in May 1960, General de Gaulle actually supported the cold war policy during the episode when the summit meeting broke down. Now de Gaulle decided that the moment had come to put into practice his long-cherished plan for creating, on the basis of "lesser Europe", a political bloc under the aegis of France and inde-

pendent of the U.S.A. In July 1960, Adenauer and de Gaulle met at Rambouillet. Without beating about the bush, the French President put forward his plan for political unification of "Europe of the six" in the form of a coalition without any supranational elements. The representatives of the governments would regularly meet and jointly solve problems of policy, economy, and defence. De Gaulle's plan decidedly contradicted all the designs of the proponents of "European unity", who had visions of eliminating the national states and establishing a federal "superstate". De Gaulle, on the contrary, had in mind only a confederation of independent states. Adenauer was terrified and begged de Gaulle to refrain at least from making his plans public. But the General did precisely that: he expounded his plan at his press conference on September 5. The other members of The Six responded unanimously and negatively. As for Adenauer, all he managed to do was help to convene a conference of the heads of governments of the six countries.

The conference was held on February 10-11, 1961 in Paris, with de Gaulle in the chair. He had to take a great deal of fierce criticism of his intentions. It was a fiasco, though the Gaullist plan was discussed in various committees until April 1962. In describing that failure in his *Memoirs of Hope*, de Gaulle drew this conclusion: "It is no less obvious that, if the Western countries of the Old World remain subordinated to the New World, Europe will never be European... If our neighbours refused to follow France's appeal for an independent European Europe, this was partly because of their traditional fear of our leading role, but chiefly because in the conditions of the cold war in which the world exists their desire to have American protection takes precedence over everything." General de Gaulle thus continually found fresh proof that the most important obstacle to a policy of consolidating national independence was the cold war.

The alliance with Bonn proved unavailing not only for political unification of Western Europe independent of the U.S.A. De Gaulle got no support for his efforts to transform the N.A.T.O. alliance either. Moreover, West German representatives in the organs of that bloc openly condemned the reduction of France's participation in the system of military integration in the Atlantic alliance. And in matters of foreign trade within the Common Market the F.R.G. was France's main rival.

De Gaulle's attitude to this was one of regret but also of understanding. Had he not said that "a state worthy of the name has no friends"? He believed that the cause of the failure lay in the difference between the real interests of the two nations, which would sooner or later come in conflict. Besides, in diplomacy just as in war, success was most often the result of oblique rather

than direct action, of strategy that did not bring immediate tangible results. He had failed to achieve political unification of The Six; but why couldn't he try to achieve it just for the two nations? The alliance with Bonn was fervently supported by influential circles of the French bourgeoisie. It weakened the opposition to de Gaulle's policy of the parties suffering from "Euromania", like the M.R.P. Finally, the majority of the French, bearing in mind three devastating German invasions, favoured real reconciliation with Germany.

Far from slackening his efforts to "seduce" Bonn, de Gaulle stepped them up. In July 1962, Chancellor Adenauer came on an official state visit to Paris. As distinct from the previous business-like visits, this time he was accorded a magnificent reception. De Gaulle decorated the Chancellor with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour and showered him with flattery. After Adenauer's departure he began taking German lessons. De Gaulle had a fair command of that language since his youth, but now he was going to speak publicly before Germans and win the hearts of the F.R.G. population with his Gallic eloquence in their native tongue. In September de Gaulle went on a visit across the Rhine. This trip is worth discussing in greater detail.

On September 4, Adenauer met the French President at the airport in Bonn. In a gesture that surprised everyone, de Gaulle embraced the astounded old man and kissed him on both cheeks. The Chancellor later said: "That was the first time I had been kissed by a foreign statesman, and a Frenchman to boot!" Indeed, one might well be astounded...

But that was merely the beginning. During five days, the General crossed West Germany from north to south and visited Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Stuttgart, and the cities of the Ruhr. Everywhere he made speeches in German to enormous crowds. De Gaulle spoke mostly of the friendship between the French and the Germans, referring to it as "one of the major phenomena of the present epoch". He openly flattered his listeners, repeating that they were a "great nation". General de Gaulle insistently hinted that friendship with France was of special, exceptional significance for the Germans. In Cologne, speaking before a crowd of half a million people waving French flags, he slapped Adenauer on the shoulder telling him what a good German he was. De Gaulle even dug up a remote German ancestor in his extensive genealogy, a certain Kolb, emphasising his blood kinship with the German people. To win the audience, he said things that shocked a great many people. At a military school in Hamburg, de Gaulle, former leader of Free France, declared that he was honoured and overjoyed to meet Bundeswehr officers, and that the French and the Germans always performed great deeds only where the military

took part. In a country with such a strong military tradition, this could not fail to produce a favourable impression, although many were scandalised, particularly abroad.

The solemn and extraordinary surroundings in which the General spoke, his manner of speaking, so strange to the Germans, his low, sonorous, vibrant voice, grand gestures — all of this made an enormous impression on the German mob. The British journalist Nora Beloff wrote that, watching the crowd in Munich, correspondents said that such outbursts of enthusiasm had not been seen since Hitler's time. The magazine *Der Spiegel*, well-known for its anti-French and anti-Gaullist bias, wrote: "De Gaulle came to Germany as the President of the French. He is returning home as the uncrowned ruler of Europe."

It was a curious but spectacular performance. Its most striking feature was that the star performer fully realised what it was all about. During one of the enthusiastic rallies, he softly said to someone accompanying him: "Enthusiasm and hatred? Pahl ... See how accidental and relative it all is." Later, he confessed to one of his intimates: "I told the Germans: *Sie sind ein grosses Volk*. You are a great people. Very well. But it is not true. If the Germans were a great people, they would never have given me such a welcome."

If we recall the advice de Gaulle once offered to a man of action in his book *The Edge of the Sword*, the meaning of this farce will become clearer... What did he need it for, after all? Soon after the trip, the Bonn government received a draft document that would lend legal form to the alliance between France and the F.R.G. The tour beyond the Rhine had been in preparation of yet another diplomatic move by de Gaulle. On January 22, 1963, "the greatest wedding in Europe", as a certain journalist put it, was celebrated in the Murat Hall of the Elysée. The treaty of Franco-West German cooperation was signed. In the process, Chancellor Adenauer got yet another of the General's kisses.

The text of the Elysée treaty was purely technical in character. It merely listed the forms of cooperation, such as the frequency of meetings between the leaders of the two countries, but said nothing of the political principles and intentions of the sides. That was an interesting symptom. De Gaulle once said that treaties are in general seasonal in character. This treaty was precisely a case in point, for it did not live to see the summer. In May 1963, during the ratification of the treaty, the pedantic Germans, contrary to all rules of international law, added to the text a political preamble in which they stated the basis of the F.R.G. policy to be close alliance with the U.S.A., military integration within N.A.T.O., "supranational Europe", Great Britain's participation in the Common Market — in sum, everything that de Gaulle rejected.

On July 2, 1963, during a dinner at the Elysée, de Gaulle said in a conversation with a group of deputies: "You know, treaties are like girls and roses. They last as long as they last. If the Franco-German treaty was not carried out this is not the first time in history."

After the conclusion of the treaty, the relations between France and West Germany deteriorated rapidly and abruptly. This coincided with the retirement of 87-year-old Adenauer and his replacement by Erhard. He was completely deaf to de Gaulle's grandiose historical reminiscences on the theme of the joint historical destinies of the Gauls and the Germans. He was more worried about concrete problems like the improvement of the foreign balance of payments. He could not forgive de Gaulle his categorical refusal to consider West Germany's nuclear armament. The contradictions between Bonn and Paris increased with the growth of de Gaulle's independence in foreign policy. The F.R.G. tended to be an "Atlantic" country, France, a purely "European" one.

In 1963 that fact became clear as never before. It all began with Great Britain making persistent efforts to join the Common Market. De Gaulle could not, of course, forget his former partner in the *Entente cordiale*. Why not enlist London's support in the struggle for independence from Washington? Not without regret, de Gaulle dismissed that possibility. He saw that the system of "special relations" between the U.S.A. and Great Britain made the former "ruler of the waves" and obedient instrument of Washington. He well remembered everything that he had to suffer during the war, when Churchill invariably sided with the U.S.A. on all critical occasions.

Was the General indeed guided only by his likes and dislikes in the conflict with Washington, by his emotions and the painful realisation of national humiliation? De Gaulle certainly always expressed his personal attitudes in politics. However, the workings of the General's "difficult nature" coincided with the objective tendencies of world development, with changes in the position of the U.S.A. and Western Europe, which he grasped with remarkable intuition and consciously formulated in the broader framework of his historical views.

It was exactly the beginning of 1963, when the General, having freed France from the burden of the Algerian war, charged, with a raised visor, at the Anglo-Saxon powers, that brought clear signs of the decline of American dominion over the Western world that had appeared unshakeable. The overwhelming economic superiority of the United States became a thing of the past. The West European countries outstripped the U.S.A. in the rate of industrial production and now stood on their own feet. One of the results of this process was, for instance, a sharp reduction of

US gold reserves (which were nearly halved) and the growth of such reserves in the vaults of West European banks. West European monopolies successfully competed with their transatlantic rivals. In politics as well, the West European powers grew unusually passive and unenthusiastic about carrying out Washington's orders, although no one, of course, yet dared to speak to it as de Gaulle did.

President Kennedy, with his characteristic energy and initiative, endeavoured to maintain American hegemony. The Atlantic economic community was intended to consolidate the U.S.A.'s competitiveness in Western Europe through lifting its customs barriers against American goods. To open the way to the establishment of that community, Great Britain declared its readiness to join the Common Market. In the Atlantic bloc, the West European countries' dependence on the U.S.A. would be increased by the planned "multilateral nuclear forces" including a fleet of 25 warships under mixed command, for which the Americans were ready to provide the Polaris rockets.

It was an offensive along the whole front.

But it quickly bogged down, for General de Gaulle struck preventive blows and repulsed the new attack on the independence of Western Europe. Could the lonely *Connétable*, unsupported actively by any of the West European partners, have indeed done it singlehanded? Well, that was what happened, although the General, personifying France, consciously or instinctively relied on the objective changes in the economic, political, and strategic role of the whole of Western Europe. One of Prime Minister Georges Pompidou's declarations contained the significant formula: "France by virtue of her geography and history is destined to play a European role." In this connection Alfred Grosser, the well-known French specialist on foreign policy, made this comment: "The salient aspect of General de Gaulle's European policy is that he pursues it in anticipation of the other countries grasping what it consists of." The others did not support him, and he acted against their will, defending their own interests with great conviction. Here is how it all happened.

On December 15-16, 1962 General de Gaulle received the British Prime Minister at Rambouillet. That was the only moment when the General hoped for a while that he might succeed in setting up a common Franco-British front against American hegemony. Indeed, the U.S.A. had just announced that it had discontinued the production of Skybolt rockets with which the British had hoped to build up their nuclear forces, they did not have enough nuclear bomb carriers. Six months before, France had exploded its first atomic device, to which de Gaulle responded with a fervent "Hurrah for France!" As early as 1960, he had

put forward a plan for building up the French "striking force" intended to ensure France's military independence. Given the limitations of French resources, the implementation of that plan was an extremely difficult and nearly impossible task. But if Great Britain and France had joined their efforts, the situation would have become quite different. Then Western Europe would not need the much touted American "protection". "During the talks in Rambouillet," de Gaulle said, "I proposed to Macmillan joint production of a rocket that could become the foundation of a Franco-British nuclear force and the embryo of a European force."

De Gaulle expected Macmillan to accept the move immediately, to ensure the independence of his country and of Western Europe. The British Premier seemed to show an understanding for de Gaulle's idea but refused to give a final answer on the grounds that on December 18 he would have to meet President Kennedy in the Bahamas. He had only one request to make: for England to be admitted to the Common Market. The General replied that that would only be possible if Great Britain subscribed to the idea of "independent European Europe". Like France, England ought to pursue an independent foreign policy. "However," de Gaulle said, "in view of the special relations binding you to America, would you join such a Europe, and if you did, would you not do so in order that this Europe should be integrated and absorbed into some sort of Atlanticism?"

Macmillan's reply was vague and evasive, insisting merely on the admittance of the United Kingdom to the European community of the six nations without any guarantees on his own part. There are several versions of the progress of those conversations. According to some sources, at one moment Macmillan, despairing of getting the General's consent, wept. With annihilating sarcasm, de Gaulle is said to have quoted a popular Edith Piaf song "Weep not, Milord! "

From France, Macmillan flew over to the Bahamas, where Kennedy offered him the Polaris rocket on condition that Great Britain would take part in the "multilateral nuclear forces", which excited the same repugnance in de Gaulle as formerly the plan for a "European army". Macmillan accepted everything that the American President had to offer, and the two leaders sent de Gaulle an invitation to join the Anglo-American agreement. On learning of England's surrender, de Gaulle was indignant. "Macmillan crossed the Atlantic," he said, "to throw himself into the embraces of Kennedy to whom he has sold the European patrimony for a mess of Polaris pottage!"

Macmillan's "betrayal" triggered off the transition to the next stage in his foreign policy. The ending of the Algerian war and the success of the referendum consolidated the General's

positions. Among his close associates he said that he now had a free hand and would implement "real" policy. January 14, 1963 was the birthday of that policy. At his eighth press conference he exploded two bombshells that stunned his Western allies.

Negotiations on Great Britain's entry in the Common Market had been going on for sixteen months. Five out of the six partners were already in principle in favour of that move. But de Gaulle declared that Great Britain would not be a member of the Common Market because her entry would lead to "the emergence of a colossal Atlantic community dependent on and subordinate to the Americans". The second bombshell concerned the "multilateral nuclear forces". The U.S.A. had already begun organising them in practical terms. De Gaulle resolutely rejected that plan, declaring that France would build its independent nuclear striking force.

There was a storm of indignation on all sides. All parties within the country criticised de Gaulle's haughtiness. All the N.A.T.O. allies were officially against his proposals although some felt malicious satisfaction, deep at heart. The American media fiercely attacked de Gaulle accusing him of all manner of things, including "senile debility".

The ominous word "isolation" was on everybody's lips. But that was not the way to frighten a man who had long been convinced that loneliness was synonymous with greatness. And when had he been *not* in isolation in his whole life? That position was quite natural for him and well accorded with his very nature. Besides, "isolation" was largely the child of the overexcited imagination of the "Atlantic" politicians and journalists. Didn't the "striking force" promise untold profits to the major French trusts? For instance, it was not by chance that Marcel Dassault, owner of aircraft works and several newspapers, was a fervent Gaullist. Many of those connected with agriculture were pleased to observe the General thrust on the Common Market partners conditions favourable for the sale of French products. The partners tried to resist, particularly West Germany, but de Gaulle laid down the ultimatum: either the conditions were accepted or else the Common Market would cease to exist. This fight went on for several years, with the General demonstrating exceptional tenacity. The French obviously appreciated de Gaulle's independent conduct, though the building of the "striking force" emptied their pockets. De Gaulle's anti-Americanism was in keeping with traditional French Americanophobia and traditional French disdain for the primitive, if rich, civilisation of the "Amerloks". Incidentally, the General himself constantly used that slangy word in private conversation, expressive of his contempt for the Americans. De

Gaulle's independent stance flattered the feeling of Francocentrism ineradicable in the hearts of most Frenchmen.

In his *Memoirs of Hope*, de Gaulle wrote this about the hostile reaction to his independent policy: "But neither did I experience any lack of support. I was conscious of the support of our people who, while not suffering from conceit, nevertheless insist on France remaining France... I felt that people opened their hearts to me."

In the summer of 1963, de Gaulle withdrew the French Atlantic Fleet from the N.A.T.O. command. Only two French divisions remained under American command instead of the 14 originally stipulated, apart from several air force units. De Gaulle missed no chance to blast US policy. As US intervention in Vietnam increased, he criticised it more and more trenchantly, and in May 1965 called back French representatives from the S.E.A.T.O., which virtually meant France's secession from that South-East Asian aggressive bloc. He incisively denounced American interference in the Dominican Republic. He also made major moves in foreign policy without even warning Washington. Thus, in 1964 de Gaulle announced France's official recognition of the Chinese People's Republic. When the "Kennedy round" began in May 1964, that is, at attempt to reduce tariffs on American goods in Western Europe, France resolutely opposed that venture. Through diplomatic channels, highly placed emissaries, and in secret letters de Gaulle was offered concessions, he was threatened and cajoled. He remained adamant. With all that, the President invariably stressed his feeling of friendship for the American people. On November 22, 1963, on his birthday, de Gaulle learnt of the Kennedy assassination. He immediately gave orders to prepare his plane for flying over to the U.S.A. to attend the funeral. The F.B.I. and the French security service warned him that O.A.S. escapees in America were preparing an attempt on his life. It was suggested that he should follow the cortege of mourners in a car. But General de Gaulle, wearing his uniform, walked right behind the casket in the centre of the first rank in a crowd of presidents, kings and ministers. He made this statement: "President Kennedy fell like a soldier under fire, doing his duty and in the service of his country. A great example, a great memory."

After the funeral ceremony the widow of the late President asked de Gaulle to pay her a visit at the White House. The conversation lasted a quarter of an hour. Jacqueline Kennedy took a flower from a bouquet placed in a vase right before Kennedy's flight to Texas, and handed it to de Gaulle.

The same evening, the meeting with Lyndon Johnson took place. That Texan had met de Gaulle in 1960 and had had a con-

versation with him. He had said at the time: "I had been told that de Gaulle was a cold and stiff-necked person. Nothing of the kind. He struck me as extremely cordial, with something of our old-time southern gentleman about him. At the same time," he had added with a broad grin, "I found we had something in common, our height, for example. We're both over six feet and, apparently, share identical views on many things..."

Now Johnson had occasion to see that being the same height was by far not enough to share de Gaulle's views. A dialogue of the deaf ensued. In the subsequent months the General declared himself to be too busy for a visit to the U.S.A. to meet the American President, though he did find time to go to Mexico and to tour half a dozen Latin American countries. Everywhere he waved the flag of independence, warmly welcomed by all who resented American domination.

In the meantime, the struggle continued around the plan for the "multilateral nuclear forces". The chair of France remained empty at the negotiations on that issue. It became clear that the N.A.T.O. nuclear forces were in fact American and West German forces. This was clearly stated on November 5, 1964, by France's Premier Georges Pompidou, who called them "destructive for Europe" and "provocative". It may be asked, he said, "if such a multilateral force is not ... ultimately directed in one or another measure against France?"

General de Gaulle stepped up the building of the independent French "strike force". In the autumn of 1963, clad in an enormous white coat of a nuclear physicist, reaching to his feet, he personally inspected the nuclear plants in Pierrelatte. At the end of that year, the French armed forces were provided with 50-kiloton atomic bombs, and in January 1964 production was begun of the Mirage-IV planes intended to carry those bombs to the targets. For de Gaulle, the "striking force" was a diplomatic weapon, but it was a heavy burden on French economy. To complete the development of nuclear weapons, tests were carried out one after another (nine bombs had been exploded before 1966, de Gaulle was personally present at one of the explosions). Hence the jarring contradictions in de Gaulle's foreign policy. He refused to join the Moscow treaty on the banning of nuclear tests in three spheres and continued to pollute the atmosphere with radiation, to the indignation of the world public opinion.

All these were the negative aspects of the "policy of greatness", and there were quite a few of them. De Gaulle persisted in that policy, ignoring Johnson's accusation of "narrow nationalism". Indeed, narrow-mindedness was the last shortcoming of which the General might be suspected. At the February 4, 1965 press conference, de Gaulle touched off a new bombshell. He demanded

that the dollar should no longer be used as a means of international financial settlements, and that a single gold standard should be accepted. Indeed, the arrangements made in those long-gone times when nearly all the gold was in America were now out of date. There was more yellow metal in Europe now than at Fort Knox. France had already converted part of its dollar reserves into gold. If the other countries of Europe had followed that example, the United States would have faced imminent bankruptcy. The Americans would have been able to exchange for gold only a small portion of the greenbacks they were spreading throughout the world, shifting their own financial difficulties onto the shoulders of other nations. De Gaulle's initiative was fatally dangerous to the U.S.A. The punch was delivered to the most sensitive spot.

On September 9, 1965 de Gaulle held yet another press conference. The time was coming when the articles of the Common Market treaty would have to take effect which envisaged the principle of supranationality. De Gaulle again rejected it and declared that nothing could make France submit to the will of others. But the real highlight of that press conference was the question of the Atlantic alliance. "Our country will remain an ally of our allies," the French President declared, "but on expiry of the term of our commitments, that is, no later than 1969, our subordinate status, in other words, the integration envisaged by the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation which places our future in alien hands, will come to an end... We shall see to it that this organisation does not deprive us of our freedom of action."

This produced an outburst of indignation in the American media. The White House decided, however, to refrain from public scandal. Former President Eisenhower suggested that de Gaulle could be pacified by appointment to the post of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the N.A.T.O. forces! On the whole, however, the impression was that the U.S.A. did not believe in the seriousness of de Gaulle's intentions. Would he really dare to infringe on the holy of holies of the capitalist world, the Atlantic alliance? But the General dared to do it, all right.

On February 21, 1966, at his regular press conference, he announced that France, intending to restore her sovereignty, had decided to withdraw from the N.A.T.O. military alliance, and demanded that all the bases, headquarters, etc., not under French command, be pulled out from France. Shortly afterwards, a note to the 14 N.A.T.O. member countries declared that all French units were henceforth withdrawn from the Atlantic armed forces, that all Frenchmen would be called back from the N.A.T.O. headquarters, and that all foreign bases, airfields, depots, etc. were to be removed from French territory. France presented a schedule for the evacuation of 29 US bases with 33,000 officers and men. The whole

operation was to be concluded by April 1, 1967. The N.A.T.O. military and strategic structure, relying mostly on French territory, was falling apart. Needless to say, the response to de Gaulle's decision was the gnashing of teeth and howls of indignation, which did not conceal Washington's confusion and perplexity.

General de Gaulle said that the N.A.T.O. operation was the last important battle of his life. It did not prove the last, of course, but it *was* extremely important. It can be considered in the same light as de Gaulle's struggle for building an armoured corps in the 1930s, even the feat of June 18, 1940, the struggle against the European Defence Community, or the cessation of the Algerian war, that is, those stages in the General's biography at which he resolutely embodied the will of France and served her national interest. He again showed his exceptional qualities of a great political leader capable of pursuing a goal despite numerous obstacles, overcoming them with unusual patience and tenacity. Opposing him were the governments of all the Atlantic countries, from which he could not break away because of his class positions. He wanted to attain something that seemed unattainable — to withdraw from the N.A.T.O. system of integration, and in doing so to consolidate rather than undermine the positions of capitalist France. And he was alone in this. De Gaulle had tried to enlist the support of Adenauer and even Macmillan, but he had never begged for it. He skilfully created a political situation in which he could take steps that would have spelt immediate political ruin for any other bourgeois politician. The fact was that de Gaulle again became involved in a conflict with his own class, with most of France's bourgeoisie which worshipped the Atlantic alliance as a divinity ensuring the maintenance of its dominion as a class. But, as always, he did not renounce his class: he simply was more far-sighted in interpreting the meaning of the events. He encountered the resistance of all the traditional political parties, from the Independents to the Socialists. No one but the Communists ever questioned N.A.T.O.: everybody was in favour of the most active participation in that organisation. De Gaulle struck a well-calculated blow at the most suitable moment, when US prestige and influence were undermined by the war in Vietnam and the currency crisis, and when support for a search of an understanding with the East was growing.

The N.A.T.O. operation was, however, merely a part of the policy of greatness. These and some other actions of de Gaulle were limited to the framework of the Atlantic bloc and "lesser Europe". But he was a political leader of global ideas, thinking in terms of the whole world rather than individual countries or even continents. "France, being France, must pursue a world policy in world affairs," he said. He realised that France's greatness could only be ensured by solving world problems including the biggest of them — relations

between the two social systems. The governments of the other Western countries acted, of course, in their own different ways to achieve that goal. To forestall his Western partners, de Gaulle implemented here as well a policy of an incomparably greater scope, the more so that he could rely on such a factor as the special historical ties between Russia and France, his aspirations for independence, and France's prestige that had grown largely due to his efforts. In the *Memoirs of Hope* de Gaulle wrote: "I decided that the situation as a whole had changed in comparison with what it was when N.A.T.O. was founded. It now seems unlikely that the Soviet side will embark on a campaign to conquer the West... But if one does not wage war, one must sooner or later make peace... For the French, Soviet Russia was a great country, our ally in two world wars. By its valour and its countless sacrifices it ensured the final victory, and without its participation peace today was inconceivable."

These ideas of the General dated from 1958, according to his memoirs. Already at that time he favoured a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. As early as 1960, de Gaulle conducted negotiations with the Soviet government delegation in Paris, which indicated a mutual desire of the two countries for closer contacts and community of views on certain aspects of the German problem. However, the positive results of that meeting were soon overshadowed by the growing tension resulting from the disruption of the summit meeting, mounting disagreements on the German question, and the Caribbean crisis.

The rapprochement with the Soviet Union assumed greater urgency for de Gaulle as the tendency towards independence in his foreign policy strengthened. In 1964, France and the U.S.S.R. concluded a long-term trade agreement, and in the next, agreements on the joint development of a system of colour television, on cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, on scientific and technological cooperation, and the study of space. Foreign Ministers of France and the U.S.S.R. exchanged visits, and in 1966, General de Gaulle came to the U.S.S.R. on an official visit at the invitation of the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet and of the Soviet government.

It was not accidental that de Gaulle made that major step in 1966. He believed that, having consolidated the positions of France, he now had every moral right to proceed to establish closer ties with the Soviet Union, a task he had set himself in 1958, immediately after coming to power. He regarded his visit as a new and important step in the struggle for France's greatness which he pursued through his independent policy. However significant his successes may have been in implementing that policy with regard to Western Europe, N.A.T.O. and the U.S.A., they were not on a big enough

scope to lead to the solution of the most important world problem — the relaxation of international tension. Without an active, comprehensive and independent role in solving that problem, France certainly could not figure in world politics as a great world power, which was de Gaulle's most important goal. He believed that the relaxation of international tension was above all a European problem, and that Europe would have to take the most important steps in that direction. In de Gaulle's view, France and the Soviet Union were intended to make these steps by history itself, by their very nature and the will of their peoples.

It was said in the West that in 1966, Charles de Gaulle sought in Moscow protection for France against a possible new outbreak of fire from across the Rhine, and against the much too heavy US patronage. These considerations may have played a certain part. However, as distinct from the 1944 visit to Moscow, there was no question of concluding a military-political treaty of alliance, the situation in Europe had changed, and it posed other tasks. But the traditional factors of the Franco-Russian alliance must have inspired de Gaulle, who always used history as a basis for political decisions. The new orientation towards Moscow reflected, as always, de Gaulle's conviction, the dominant one in his world outlook, that the national element was a greater value than ideological factors. For this reason, the restoration of France's independence quite naturally implied, in de Gaulle's view, loosening the ties with the U.S.A. and strengthening the bonds with the U.S.S.R., with France maintaining an independent position between the two world's superpowers. It should be pointed out, of course, that de Gaulle's policy towards the Soviet Union was partially motivated by certain illusions stemming from the theory of "convergence" of the two social systems. Aspiring to unite Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals", he believed that the necessary condition for that was social and political changes in the nature of the socialist and capitalist countries. Significantly, in one of his speeches in Moscow he said that at present the nations were "subject to the laws of one and the same mechanical and scientific civilisation". In the same speech, however, this doubtful assertion was followed by a very realistic emphasis on the considerable differences between the regimes in the U.S.S.R. and France. The fact that the Soviet leaders proceeded from precisely the same realistic evaluation of the state of affairs, created a businesslike atmosphere ruling out ideological confusion. It was generally understood that the talks involved interstate relations between countries of different social types. There were no reservations, insincerity, or playing games in the traditional style of bourgeois diplomacy.

General de Gaulle flew over to Moscow on June 20, 1966, and left this country on July 1. He knew that he would be given a warm

reception as a leader of the anti-Hitlerite coalition. But the reality surpassed all his expectations, and the General was sincerely overjoyed at the atmosphere of his meetings with the Soviet people. The Soviet government offered the General a residence in the Kremlin. The French journal *Paris-Match* wrote: In 1966, "for the first time since the great fire of Moscow in 1812, the French flag is flying over the Kremlin." Incidentally, in speaking of the traditions of friendship between Russia and France, de Gaulle emphasised that "they never had any serious grievances against each other, not even in the days of *War and Peace* or at the time of Sevastopol". The General often had a rather unusual interpretation of history.

From the moment of leaving Paris for Moscow and to the time of his return, de Gaulle covered 20,000 kilometres by air, including 14,000 over the territory of the Soviet Union. Five million people turned out to welcome the General in different Soviet cities. On 23 occasions there were spontaneous direct contacts between de Gaulle and the Soviet people, and he also made 20 speeches before them. In all, his talks with the Soviet leaders lasted 26 hours.

Paris-Match wrote: "Thus he broke all his previous records, astounded the world, and upset our friends in the New World." What was it this time that excited the indignation of the Americans, still smarting under the affront of France's withdrawal from the N.A.T.O. military system? It was, of course, the new important manifestation of France's independence, a considerable degree of political agreement between the leaders of the two countries, and the extraordinarily friendly atmosphere during de Gaulle's visit. We must give the General his due: he did all he could to foster that atmosphere, using all his famed eloquence, breadth of culture and political skill. The 75-year-old President had found time and patience enough to study the Russian language especially for the occasion, and he ended almost all his speeches in Russian. He showed great tact, sense of proportion and taste in choosing the necessary words to suit every occasion. Thus, on arriving in Leningrad, he said: "It gives me a great pleasure today to be here in Leningrad, this truly historical city for it was here that the grandeur of Russia was first demonstrated to the world and the greatest event in your history, your revolution, took place... A magnificent city, which has been able to preserve and develop all that it inherited from the noble past, and, at the same time, to become a modern city. A mighty city! A radiant city!" In conclusion, de Gaulle recited in Russian these lines from Pushkin: "Thou Peter's city, stand there beautiful and staunch like Russia!"

In Kiev he spoke of the daughter of Yaroslav the Wise, who became a French queen, and of the role of the ancient city in building great Russia. He called Volgograd the most heroic of all cities. In Novosibirsk he admired the scientific and industrial

achievements of Siberia, "mysterious and fascinating, full of poetry and romance". At the University of Moscow the General spoke emotionally of Lomonosov's greatness, of "the universal nature of the scientific truth", of culture, science and progress being the goals of the new alliance between Russia and France. De Gaulle was clearly satisfied with the trip. During a meeting with the officers and men of the Taman Division of the Guards he said: "I seem to have grown 20 years younger."

The outcome of the Moscow talks was a Soviet-French declaration, which opened up a new important stage in the relations between the U.S.S.R. and France, in the progress towards European security and consolidation of peace throughout the world. The talks between General de Gaulle and the Soviet leaders, conducted in an atmosphere of great cordiality, were mostly concerned with European problems, which the parties agreed to consider in a European context. The two sides also agreed that the Soviet Union and France must make a decisive contribution to the organisation of fruitful cooperation of entire Europe, cooperation in which they would endeavour to involve all the European countries.

Other concrete international problems were also discussed. There was a complete agreement on the issue of American interference in Vietnam. The problem of disarmament and the United Nations' role were also considered in the spirit of concord. A particularly comprehensive and detailed coordination was achieved of the Soviet-French relations in politics, economy, and culture. A programme for the extension of these relations in all respects was approved. It was decided to set up a permanent Soviet-French committee and to hold regular political consultations. The two sides agreed to establish a direct communication line between the Kremlin and the Elysée. On the whole, the Moscow talks of 1966 were a fundamental contribution to the growth of a Franco-Soviet understanding.

De Gaulle's trip to the U.S.S.R. began a period of continuous development and extension of Franco-Soviet relations. And it was not only a matter of cooperation in economy, culture and science on a greater scale than ever: the positions of the two countries on the most important and acute problems of international relations also became closer. More and more often, France and the U.S.S.R. took up fundamentally similar positions. Two cases in point were the 1967 Middle Eastern crisis, and the American aggression in Vietnam. Of special importance was the two countries' endeavour to achieve a relaxation of international tension. In the subsequent years it became absolutely clear that the 1966 talks in Moscow were an important landmark not only in the relations between the two countries but also in the development of the entire international situation. It was in 1966 that the era of détente began. The relations

between the U.S.S.R. and France became the standard and model for countries with different social systems during détente. Such positive phenomena as Willy Brandt's "Eastern policy", a system of treaties between the F.R.G. and the countries of socialism, and many other events in international life were undoubtedly influenced by Soviet-French cooperation. That alone favourably affected the world situation, not to mention the tangible effect of the two countries' diplomatic moves on concrete issues. Without their concerted action it would have been hard to convene the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki and ensure its success.

Interestingly, the significance of the Franco-Soviet summit meeting of 1966 seemed to grow with time. Subsequent events, far from overshadowing it, emphasised its meaning. An important factor here was that Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who succeeded de Gaulle in the office of President, largely continued his policy. Between 1966 and 1980, there were ten meetings between the leaders of the U.S.S.R. and France, and each of them was a continuation of the 1966 developments.

We have mentioned several times that, despite his emotional nature, de Gaulle was far from sentimental in politics, and his realism at times bordered on cynicism. What can one say in this respect of de Gaulle's policy towards the Soviet Union? For one thing, no one ever heard him make any of those contemptuous remarks that some of his close associates heard from him after his advertising campaign in West Germany. It may be asserted with complete certainty that the rapprochement with the U.S.S.R. was in keeping with the very spirit and essence of his foreign policy and accorded, as he was profoundly convinced, with the basic interests of France of permanent rather than short-term nature. "This is a visit of eternal France to eternal Russia," he said. And he nearly always ended his speeches with "Long live Russia!" His sincere sympathy for this country somehow were not in conflict with his class positions, with his negative attitude to communism. Such was de Gaulle's extremely complicated and contradictory attitude to the Soviet Union. Naturally, he took good care of his interests at all times. The rapprochement with the Soviet Union consolidated the General's political position within the country. Significantly, he came to the U.S.S.R. not long before the parliamentary elections of March 1967. It was true that, apart from the masses of rank-and-file voters, there were other forces in France, and these looked askance on trips to Moscow. Here belonged the champions of "Atlantic" allegiance, like the Democratic Centre Party headed by Lecanuet. It was this group that was routed during the 1967 elections. As for de Gaulle's supporters, all observers agreed that their failures during the elections were due to his

conservative social course, while their successes, to the independent foreign policy.

The influential circles of the ruling class in France were increasingly disapproving of that policy. The opposition of the "Atlantic" parties grew stronger, particularly after the breakaway from the military system of the N.A.T.O. alliance and the re-orientation towards the U.S.S.R. The tangible cause of an outbreak of that dissatisfaction was de Gaulle's independent position towards Israel's war against the Arab countries in 1967.

The General had long been critical of Israel's policy. He doubted the legality of founding that state, which to him appeared artificial. "The Jews," he said, "who until now have been dispersed, but have remained what they have always been, namely, a chosen people, self-confident and domineering, are likely once they are reassembled on the site of their past greatness, to turn the very poignant yearnings they have voiced for 19 centuries ... into a passionate striving for conquest." He admitted that Israel could coexist with Arabs if it were a peace-loving state. By displaying a little modesty, he said, the Jews could find "a peaceful *modus vivendi* with their neighbours". But in 1956 there emerged an openly "bellicose State of Israel bent on expansion", which attacked Egypt during the Suez crisis.

De Gaulle condemned the antinationalist policy of a military alliance with Israel adopted by the last governments of the Fourth Republic. It was said in those times that "every Israelite had two homelands, his own — and France". The influence of the pro-Israeli and Zionist circles on the policies of the governments of Guy Mollet and Bourguès-Maunoury had been enormous and pernicious. Suffice it to recall here France's participation in the crazy Suez venture.

When the General came to power, he began to wind up the "friendship" with Israel — gradually but firmly. Some particularly odious forms of cooperation, as that in the field of military intelligence, were entirely discontinued.

At the same time de Gaulle repeatedly warned Israeli leaders against the danger of aggressive ventures. That accorded with his policy of extending the cooperation with the Arab countries, particularly with Algeria, which de Gaulle persistently implemented after concluding the Evian agreements. He thereby defended France's vital interests, for it received almost all of its oil from the Arab countries. In general, the policy towards the countries of the third world was a matter of special concern for de Gaulle. Naturally, it remained a neocolonialist policy, but de Gaulle showed a much greater realism than other Western leaders. The relations with the third world were for him an important part of the policy of greatness. When in September 1966 he forcefully condemned, in Cambodia, the American war in Vietnam and demanded its cessation,

he knew that such statements strengthened France's prestige and influence in Asia and Africa. Indeed, no other Western political leader ever acquired the same influence in the developing countries as General de Gaulle.

When Israel attacked the Arab countries, de Gaulle ordered to stop all supplies of arms to the aggressor. He was indignant, and he reminded the world that on May 24, 1967, he had told the Israeli Foreign Minister Eban that France would regard as an aggressor that side which struck the first blow. But Israel ignored that warning and committed the aggression. The French representative at the United Nations, along with the U.S.S.R. and a group of non-aligned nations, condemned Tel-Aviv. At a cabinet meeting, de Gaulle pointed to direct links between the American war in Vietnam and the new hotbed of aggression.

The whole of the bourgeois press of France and of the other Western countries attacked de Gaulle as with one voice, as fiercely as never before. The proponents of the "Atlantic" orientation were particularly infuriated at the fact that France was on the same side as the U.S.S.R. André François-Poncet, the well-known reactionary, wrote in *Le Figaro*: "France, dissociating herself from the United States, Britain, Germany ... and other tried and tested friends, did not hesitate to align herself with the Soviet Union... Unfortunately, this step followed numerous other steps testifying to a systematic striving for rapprochement with the Soviet Union." "Strangely enough," *L'Express* wrote, "the fact that France voted with the Soviet Union in the United Nations shocked General de Gaulle's immediate associates more than his decision in 1965 to take France out of N.A.T.O." Many French ministers, the journal wrote, felt bitterness and expressed it in unofficial conversations, and prominent Gaullists did not conceal their discontent either. Albin Chandon, Lucien Neuwirth, Léo Hamon spoke of a "gap". They said that "for the first time, faith in the General always being right in foreign policy has been shaken".

De Gaulle became the prime target of the entire bourgeois press. Poisoned arrows were shot at him from all sides. Earlier, his critics on the right were violent anti-Communists and N.A.T.O. champions, whereas now to these was added the whole network of world Zionism, with branches in all the countries. In France, de Gaulle was defended only by a few Gaullist newspapers with a limited circulation. The Communist press also approved of his actions.

Indeed, except for such negative elements as the rejection of the Moscow treaty on the banning of nuclear tests, de Gaulle implemented a bold and progressive national policy. With his customary imperturbability even more in evidence than usual, the General stated, unruffled: "As usual it is the bourgeois, the officers and the

diplomats who are against me, and with me are only those who ride in the Metro." It was only too true, in this case.

In July 1967, de Gaulle sailed on the cruiser *Colbert* for Canada, where the World Exhibition took place in Montreal. He visited Quebec, the province of Canada with a French population of six million. The General was given a tumultuous reception. There was a strong movement for national autonomy there. On July 24, de Gaulle spoke from the balcony of the Montreal City Hall to an enormous crowd of the French. The General said: "I am overwhelmed with emotion. Long live Quebec! Free Quebec!" His last words drew a great wave of emotion from the crowd, which started singing the *Marseillaise*. The *Montreal Gazette* wrote: "The fact remains that de Gaulle is in a sense a legendary figure and in Quebec he is practically deified. No other man in the world, we repeat, no other man, could have said 'Long live free Quebec' and evoked a deeper emotional reaction than Charles de Gaulle."

However, the critical response to the incident proved to be just as violent everywhere in the West, including France. De Gaulle's championship of the freedom of Quebec was declared to be an unprecedented interference in the internal affairs of Canada. The loudest howls came from those who did not regard American action in Vietnam as interference at all, and who accepted it as normal that the Canadian French still smarted under the survivals of two centuries of British domination. The U.S.A. was particularly indignant. De Gaulle had implied that the French population of Quebec must defend its national rights not so much from the Canadian government as from that of the U.S.A. The American papers wrote of yet "another insidious Gaullist conspiracy aimed at undermining US influence, this time in Canada". To make matters worse, de Gaulle spent more than an hour at the Soviet pavilion during his visit to the World Exhibition, referring to it as "amazing", whereas the British pavilion was given a bare fifteen minutes, while the American one he simply ignored.

The government of Canada officially condemned de Gaulle's speech. The General then refused to go to Ottawa and, interrupting his visit, returned to France. Here the papers were in the grip of an anti-Gaullist hysteria. They wrote that the General was showing his age, that he was not responsible for his words, that his behaviour was off-handed and scandalous. These were not the worst epithets. British television broadcast an insulting programme. An actor made up as de Gaulle played a lunatic making a speech with the General's characteristic intonations and gestures, whereupon two hospital attendants put him in a straight jacket and took him away in a wheel-chair.

De Gaulle found no understanding even amongst his closest colleagues. In that period, the President's enviable ability to hold

men in contempt came in quite useful. Quite clearly, his campaign for the liberation of Quebec was merely a pretext for the influential bourgeois circles to express their resentment against de Gaulle's entire foreign policy. He had, of course, rendered major services to French big business. By resolving the 1958 internal crisis, he had helped it to avoid a repetition of the Popular Front in one form or another. He had found a way out of the Algerian cul-de-sac. Relying on his strong personal power, he had created favourable conditions for the monopolies to limber up for the competition in the Common Market. De Gaulle had helped big business to accelerate the process of concentration and consolidate its positions. For the time being, he kept in check the opposition of the working people to the state-monopoly reactionary social policies. For quite a long time, de Gaulle's staunch defence of the national interests had suited big business.

But gradually the situation changed. The French trusts now felt cramped within the national boundaries, they wanted to join forces with foreign trusts to implement the division of labour not only within France or even Western Europe but also on a global scale. French capital was eager to get out into the wide open spaces of the "Atlantic economy". The epoch of multinational corporations was coming, and French capital intended to play an active role in it.

In the view of big business, the "policy of greatness" was out-of-date. Besides, it required enormous expenditure and was fraught with the danger of aggravation of the social situation in the country. The industrialists wanted to make it plain to de Gaulle that it was time to stop and to revert to the more or less normal, respectable "Atlantic" policy. That was what they wanted to bring home to de Gaulle as they berated him for his foreign policy in 1967. But he was not going to retreat, not being one of those run-of-the-mill bourgeois politicians who dance attendance on their real masters and adapt their state policy to their wishes.

On November 27, 1967, at his regular press conference, he again resolutely demanded the elimination of the obsolete privileges of the dollar, condemned Israel's aggressive policy, castigated the disgusting US war in Vietnam, came out in support of Quebec, confirmed the immutability of Poland's Western borders, and again rejected London's importunate attempts to join the Common Market.

That "rebel in power", as he was then called, was still determined to lead France along the path of greatness and independence.

May 1968 marked the tenth anniversary of de Gaulle's term in office. In those ten years he had overcome a great many difficulties, solved knotty problems, and avoided grave dangers. There had been failures, too, yet in the end the General had found a way out of all critical situations. At the beginning of 1968, the country's political horizon certainly did not appear quite cloudless to de Gaulle. After the parliamentary elections of March 1967, the positions of the Left forces had consolidated continually. The Communists and other parties of the Left had gradually overcome their differences, moving toward unity. Contrariwise, the contradictions in the ruling bloc had grown. Giscard d'Estaing's group of Independents had gone over to the opposition. The party in power itself, which was now called The Union of Democrats for the Fifth Republic (*Union des démocrates pour la V^e République*) was in a state of foment and seemed to be moving away from General de Gaulle. It was mostly concerned with the problem of its post-de Gaullean existence. The "historical" Gaullists who used to carry the General's flag gave way to the "young wolves" of the new, completely unheroic Gaullism. For the new Gaullist politicians, Gaullism meant merely a chance of enjoying the ruling party's privileges. Despite all this, the political situation did not worry de Gaulle unduly, and he felt quite confident.

The General was proud of the fact that never before since the war had France's positions in the world been so solid. His independent foreign policy ensured it a stable and honourable position. France's economic potential grew. But that growing power became a source of the state's weakness, as the domination of the monopolies resulted in more acute class contradictions. The industrial workers and all the working people gained nothing from the increased productivity of their labour and the attainments of the scientific and technological revolution. All they could do was keep up their living standards with a great struggle, while their needs had grown and new ones had appeared. At the same time the monopolies grew fabulously rich. A social disease incurable under capitalism undermined the foundations of the strong state that was de Gaulle's ideal. He saw its symptoms and even tried to diagnose it.

But the cure he suggested was too much of a Utopian illusion involving timid and ambiguous "participation" projects attractive neither to the workers nor to the industrialists. In his New Year speech de Gaulle said: "The year 1968, I salute it with satisfaction, because, owing to the interestedness of the personnel in the profits of a great number of industries, it is going to mark an important stage in the development towards a new social order, that is to say, towards direct participation of the workers in the results, the capital, and the responsibilities of our French enterprises."

In 1967, a new series of economic and social decrees was promulgated. They prescribed an increase in the working people's payments to the social insurance banks, abolished the electiveness of their management, and extended the participation of entrepreneurs in them. Simultaneously, another decree on the interestedness of the workers in the fruits of the development of their enterprises was published. That fresh attempt to stimulate cooperation between classes involved a small portion of the working people, some two million only, who would, in some indefinite future, enjoy an insignificant share of the profits, for the sake of which they would have to give up the struggle to improve their living standards, dropping, among other things, their demands for wage increases. The trade unions rejected the new decree on "participation". The whole venture was so lightweight and demagogic that it seems amazing that de Gaulle should have pinned all his hopes for the solution of social problems on it. Again he proved intrinsically incapable of understanding the meaning and nature of class struggle. A captive to the strangest illusions, he had no inkling at all, until May 1968, of the approach of an unprecedented moral and political upheaval in the state he had created.

That was also true of his attitude to the student movement, which served as a kind of detonator of the May 1968 explosion. De Gaulle in fact believed that, as distinct from the prewar times, the students were no longer concerned with any political problems. He said that today nothing could stir up the students except for demands concerning university canteens.

In reality, the half a million-strong student body became involved in a powerful, if rather ambivalent, opposition movement. The government worked on various projects for a reform of the obsolete system of university education. But they were just as powerless to eliminate the causes of the university crisis as the "participation" plan was unable to do away with the real factors of the aggravation in the social situation.

The turbulent events of May 1968, which were the beginning of the end of de Gaulle's political career and personal destiny, showed the yawning abyss between the scope and courage of his foreign policy and the narrow-mindedness and blindness of his domestic

policy, particularly in the social sphere. The General seemed to have lost his identity, turning blind, confused, and weak — qualities that had formerly been so unusual in him. All his personal influence on the masses proved hopelessly undermined. The 77-year-old General would live to see the decline of his power and the disappearance of his magic authority. His legendary ability to find a way out of the most difficult and even catastrophic situations would strangely disappear, and he would have occasion to feel the justice of his own judgement expressed in the second volume of *War Memoirs*: "At great moments, history lets only those men stand at the helm of power who can direct events."

May 1 passed relatively quietly in Paris. It was raining. Lilies-of-the-valley were sold everywhere, according to custom. For the first time in many years, the May Day demonstration of the working people organised by the Communist Party and the General Confederation of Labour passed without any incidents. True, meetings and clashes went on at the School of Sociology in Nanterre, a suburb of Paris, where on May 2 lectures had to be discontinued and the premises closed. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a 23-year-old student, at the head of a small group of followers, waged an anarchist campaign, denouncing everyone right, left, and centre, and calling for a revolution. But on the whole France was tranquil. Robert Poujade, Secretary General of the ruling Gaullist party, said: "All the recent probings of opinion witness the attachment of the French to the Fifth Republic and the prestige which General de Gaulle enjoys in the most diverse sections of the public." Paris was preparing to become a city of peace, for on May 10 American-Vietnamese talks were scheduled to begin there. On May 2, Prime Minister Georges Pompidou went on a visit to Iran and Afghanistan. President de Gaulle was preparing to visit Rumania.

But after the closing of the faculty at Nanterre, the student unrest shifted to the heart of Paris, the Latin Quarter, the ancient Sorbonne. Here meetings were held and hostile student groups clashed. The rector turned to the authorities for help, and police invaded the lecture halls for the first time in many years. The clashes between 2,000 students and police units continued for several hours. Cars were burnt, and several barricades built. 596 students were detained by the police. The Sorbonne was declared closed, and the police guarded all entries, letting no one in. Several students that threw stones at the police appeared before magistrates and were sent to prison for a couple of months. But on the following day the student demonstrations began again. Again there were clashes with the police, 600 were wounded and 460 arrested. The demonstrations and clashes continued on May 7 as well. The student organisations demanded that the police should be withdrawn from the Latin Quarter, imprisoned students released and the faculties in Paris and Nanterre reopened.

General de Gaulle still saw no reason to worry. "Childishness," said he. "Those are a few bad students excited by the fear of having to pass their exams."

The reality was much more complicated than that. Students are part of the intelligentsia, in which the contradictions of social development find the most acute expression. Of course, the Parisian students' rebellion had much of the all-or-nothing attitude of youth about it, there was too much chaos and erratic wavering. In substance, though, the student unrest was due, above all, to a crisis of the system of French higher education built on 300-year-old principles. And it was not just a matter of the division into the traditional faculties or the professors wearing medieval gowns. Education in the faculties of natural science and technology did not go beyond acquisition of the practical skills of a highly qualified worker, and in the humanities, beyond memorising countless facts, theories, and views pertaining to anything under the sun except real life. The students felt that they were machine-tooled into highly specialised idiots intended to perform strictly limited functions in the political or economic mechanism of bourgeois society. Besides, the diploma could only be won at the price of what amounted to a term of hard labour. The lectures sometimes lasted ten hours a day, and half the students had to earn their living, in addition to their studies. Few could stay such a thorny course in the race after the diploma. In France, only a quarter of those who started to study finished the course. At some faculties, only one student in ten got a diploma. Interestingly, the unrest was everywhere begun by students of the humanities, that is, by those who were more than anyone else force-fed with the ideas of the "Western civilisation". The result was a violent reaction against bourgeois ideology, a "great rejection", which compelled the leaders of the Fifth Republic to speak of the "crisis of civilisation" (A. Malraux), the "spiritual crisis" (E. Faure), etc. Owing to the petty-bourgeois intellectual background of most students, their ideological orientation was mostly towards various trends of the so-called Gauchism — French for Leftism. Gauchism is a potpourri of elements of Blanquism, Trotskyism, Anarchism, Utopian theories, Maoism and many other "isms". The ideological chaos in the students' heads was a reflection of their position between the principal social classes.

De Gaulle would not and could not go into these finer points. On May 7 he told a group of deputies that he was convinced that the university must be reformed and modernised, but it was "impossible to let the opponents of the University to become established within the University. It is impossible to tolerate violence in the streets..." The General was scandalised by fresh violations of law and order that he always held sacred. Fighting, arson, barricades — all that enraged him, and he angrily told his ministers: "That means

that it is a question of trial of strength. We shall not tolerate this situation. At first, order must be reestablished... These poor students do not want to take up their course again. They mock at a return to calm and work. What they want is their cultural revolution. Well, not at any price! No question of concessions."

Education Minister Alain Peyrefitte and Minister of the Interior Christian Fouchet lost their heads, as did their subordinates. They promised concessions one day and threatened the students the next. The talks between the University administration and student representatives were unavailing. The confusion and perplexity grew.

The situation became particularly tense on the evening of May 10. The negotiations proved useless. The students built some 60 barricades around the Place Edmond-Rostand. Black and red flags were hoisted over the barricades. All around, several thousand policemen were awaiting orders without interfering in any way in the fuss behind the barricades. Among the students, there were quite a few older men who did not look like students at all. They offered some professional advice. The students were armed with Molotov cocktails and stones. In general, the whole thing looked much like some kind of spectacle. The students had no firearms, and the barricades could be razed by a few bulldozers. The police were ordered not to shoot. They were armed with gas grenades, batons and large plastic shields to ward off the stones. Fouchet and Peyrefitte did not dare to make any moves. General de Gaulle went to bed at 10, and no one dared to rouse him from sleep. Finally, at two in the morning the command was given to destroy the barricades and restore order. There came the explosions of gas grenades, and cars and buildings burst into flames. Rows of policemen behind their shields charged the barricades and started brutally beating up the students. The bloody fighting lasted five hours. Net result: 367 injured, including 32 badly wounded, 460 arrested, 188 cars burnt. In the end, the students scattered at a word from Cohn-Bendit.

Early in the morning, the "victors" — Peyrefitte, Fouchet, Joxe (acting Premier) and other ministers — came to the Elysée. Conferences lasted practically all day. There were suggestions that the students' demands should be met. "No, no and once again no!" said de Gaulle. "One does not capitulate before a mutiny. The state does not retreat." At the same time the General Confederation of Labour and other trade union organisations decided to hold a general 24-hour strike of protest against the reprisals on May 13. Behind that decision loomed the formidable shadow of France's multimillion working class. The events took an even more dramatic turn.

On the evening of May 11, Prime Minister Georges Pompidou returned from his trip to Afghanistan and Iran. He immediately

called a meeting of the cabinet and suggested adopting a new course, as one not yet personally involved in the events. The Premier proposed to reopen the Sorbonne on Monday the 13th and to satisfy the demands of the students. Some ministers objected, pointing out that that would produce an impression of the authorities' weakness and inspire the rebellious students. But de Gaulle consented to a retreat and entrusted the Prime Minister with working out the administration's tactics.

On May 13, as earlier arranged, a general strike and a huge demonstration began. The march from the Place de la République to Place Denfert-Rochereau, in which about a million workers took place, was striking in its powerful scope and organisation. The demonstration expressed the working people's protest against the reprisals meted out to the students. But the slogans the demonstrators carried also gave it another and incomparably more important political significance: "Ten years, that's enough!" "To the archives with de Gaulle!", "To the almshouse with de Gaulle!", "Adieu de Gaulle!" The demonstration was held on the tenth anniversary of the Algerian mutiny which had brought de Gaulle to power. Many carried the ironical slogan: "May 13, 1958 — May 13, 1968. Have a nice anniversary, my General!" The police kept strictly out of the way of the giant columns. The trade unions themselves organised their own service of order. The demonstrators were given the instructions to disperse and go home on reaching the Place Denfert-Rochereau. Groups of students appealed to the workers to march on and storm the Elysée, but they were a mere handful. The adventurism of the Gauchists excited suspicions. The wave of sympathy for the students began to subside. A new stage of the struggle began. The issue was no longer a reform of the University only but something much more important: liquidation of an authoritarian, antisocial regime, restoration of democracy, and meeting the working people's essential demands. On the same day, numerous demonstrations were also held in other cities of France.

On May 14, the General was expected to leave early in the morning on an official visit to Rumania. On the eve of the departure, late at night, de Gaulle felt unusually undecided. Interior Minister Fouchet advised him to put off the trip, and he nearly agreed. But then the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister came, and their advice was to go. As foreign policy always came first with de Gaulle, eventually he flew to Rumania.

In the meantime, the train of events in France took its course. The police left the Sorbonne, and the rival groups of Gauchists set up their headquarters in the lecture rooms. They were not very numerous, just a few hundred. But the temple of scholarship was flooded by crowds of curious intellectuals. The Sorbonne was now

a "critical" or "free" University. The "students' power" was declared. What did it all mean, in fact? No studies could be resumed, of course. Rallies went on day and night, one speaker coming after another. Some proclaimed anarchy: "Neither God nor master!" That was the Blanquists' old slogan. Others demanded absolute sexual freedom. University problems were also discussed, of course. There were demands for abolishing exams, obligatory curricula and courses, for dismissing all the old professors. The Internationale was often sung, but anti-Communist speeches could be heard even oftener. Many had in their hands the red booklets of Mao's sayings given out by the Chinese embassy. There were frequent references to Trotsky. The walls were all covered with posters and graffiti: "Be realists, demand the impossible!", "It is forbidden to forbid!" A "permanent creative revolution" was proclaimed. Everybody demanded a complete transformation of society. But how was that to be done, and what could it be replaced by? No one had any clear idea of that. The students then captured the Odéon cinema not far away. They tried to establish contact with the workers on strike, but the latter viewed the Gauchists' anarchist and anti-Communist actions with suspicion. They were not allowed into the plants.

There, quite a different and much more serious atmosphere prevailed. The general strike that was at first intended to last 24 hours, far from being over at the end of that period, became even more universal. The struggle assumed new forms, as workers occupied their enterprises. The movement began on May 14 with the occupation of the *Sud-Aviation* plant near Nantes. In the following two days, the same happened at the enormous complex of the automobile works of the Renault state firm. Things went so far that the office workers on strike even occupied the residence of the National Council of French Industrialists! All public transport and communications stopped and radio and TV workers struck, too. By May 20 France was completely paralysed; the number of strikers reached 10 million.

There were workers' rallies at the plants, but the speeches and the nature of demands were different from those at the Sorbonne. The workers realistically demanded the possible: improvements of the working conditions and more adequate wages. At the plants, the walls were also covered with posters and slogans. At the Renault, for instance, the slogans that recurred most often were: "40 hours", "60 years", "1,000 francs". Respectively, they referred to the length of the working week, the pension age, and the minimal wages. De Gaulle figured everywhere, of course. He had fervently desired to personalise power, to build a monarchy of the republican style. So all the vices of the Fifth Republic that had caused the outburst of discontent, were naturally centred on de Gaulle's personality. His familiar traits, gestures, general's uniform, etc. were

caricatured in the posters, which read like the French people's indictment against de Gaulle. Personal power in the service of the monopolies inevitably led him to a personal defeat. "Ten years, that's enough!" shouted all the walls of France.

While the situation in France grew worse, de Gaulle continued his trip abroad. The ministers who had forgotten, under de Gaulle, how to act independently, did not dare to make any serious moves in his absence. The entire state was held together by him alone. Debré, Fréy, Fouchet telephoned the General in Bucharest asking him to curtail his visit abroad. Finally, after a long telephone conversation with the Prime Minister, de Gaulle cut his visit in Rumania by 12 hours and returned to Paris late on Saturday, May 18.

All cabinet members met him and reported on the alarming developments. The General flew into a rage and showered them with reproaches and sarcasms: "De Gaulle goes away, and everything collapses!" But hadn't it all begun to collapse in his presence? Later, already at the Elysée, the General resolutely declared: "All this must be stopped. It's they or us! ... The reform, yes, a fancy ball, no!"

The Council of Ministers chaired by de Gaulle spent a long time deliberating on the steps to be taken. The General was pale, he looked very tired and much aged, his shoulders were sagging, and his head sometimes shook visibly. The ministers spoke at length on their views of the situation. De Gaulle suggested a new referendum, which he intended to announce to the country in a radio and TV speech on May 24. Some ministers suggested that it would be better to hold early parliamentary elections. The President hesitated but still chose his favourite instrument, a referendum.

On May 24, de Gaulle appeared on the TV screen and made a six-minute speech, probably the most colourless, dull and vapid of all his numerous speeches. It was completely inadequate to the scope of the events.

He admitted that "the country found itself on the brink of a paralysis", and he said that the danger must be prevented of "sliding, through a civil war, to the most odious and the most ruinous ventures and usurpations". In what way was that to be achieved? The French people would have to vote in a referendum for "a mandate of renovation given to the state and in the first place its head". The nature of the renovation was not clear at all, for the General offered nothing but the most general formulas. "If your response should be 'no', it goes without saying that I shall not assume my functions for long."

The French people asked themselves: where had it gone, that grandiose heroic pathos of his former speeches, his decisiveness, firmness, and self-assurance? He seemed to have lost all his eloquence, conviction, and fervour. No, he was no longer the legendary

man of action. Disappointment, puzzlement, and indignation were the people's response to de Gaulle's speech. "That is a Waterloo!" said many. When de Gaulle had consulted his ministers on the day before he had to make his speech, General Billot had said that the public expected the speech to be that of the "great de Gaulle". The speech was to have convinced the public that "we shall destroy all the Bastilles of conservatism". But nothing like that happened. On the contrary, all the newspapers with the exception of the Gaullist *Nation* judged de Gaulle's speech to be an admission of defeat and clear sign of helplessness. "Nothing new," was the *motif* of all comments on the speech. *L'Humanité's* leader read: "This time, the magic has been broken. Definitely. The man of Providence trembles on his pedestal. Ten years in power have changed him. He is no more than a doomed politician who keeps manoeuvring to get a reprieve... The head of state has given the people to understand that if the results of the referendum are unfavourable to him he will withdraw from public affairs. Bravo! But why wait? The present government does not represent anyone. No need to wait any longer. It's time to leave. So go, General, while the going is good!" But the General himself felt that he was in a kind of prostration. He realised that his speech had not influenced the events in any way, and the dangerous slide continued. On the same day a new immense manifestation was held in Paris, with hundreds of thousands marching through the streets and shouting, "A Popular Government!", "De Gaulle, resign!" During the night, gas grenades exploded again in the Latin Quarter, and hundreds were injured and arrested. In the provinces disturbances broke out all the time, too.

Never in his life had de Gaulle felt such desperation of sheer helplessness. None of his former failures, crises and trials had thrown him into such confusion. Jean-Raymond Tournoux, describing the events of those days in detail in his book *The Month of May of the General (Le mois de mai du General)*, concludes: "The General's bitterness reached an extreme degree. All his French pride wanted to prevent the nation from becoming again 'the sick man' of Europe. And there, by the turn of the hand, a few crazy men of Nanterre succeeded where the experts of psychological warfare failed in 1958, as well as those who built the barricades in 1960, the rebels of 1961, and the O.A.S. chiefs in 1962."

Even in his conversations with foreign diplomats whom he had to receive in those distressing days, the General sometimes let fall strange words that gave pause to many: "The future does not depend on us. It depends on God", "Nothing is easy in Paris".

The General felt that stronger than ever. Before his May 24 speech he had counted on the idea of a referendum as a way out. He knew that the popular movement, despite its incredible scope, had a fatal weakness: it did not have a single leadership. The principal

forces of the opposition, the French Communist Party and the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left (*Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste*), despite all the efforts of the Communists, did not adopt either a common political programme or a plan of joint action. Therefore there was no definite alternative to the Fifth Republic regime. It was no accident that the motion of no confidence was not supported by a majority in parliament on May 22. Divided, the opposition could not jointly offer anything to France. De Gaulle had hoped therefore that the referendum would be accepted as the only real way out. But the reaction was so negative that the referendum became the object of mockery and contempt. "I have missed the mark," said de Gaulle, realising that he had made a false move and was now in a trap he had set himself.

Another major tactical plan, an attempt to neutralise the main force of the regime's opponents, the working class, also misfired. Pompidou and the industrialists held talks with trade union representatives for 25 hours. They made unprecedented concessions, promising considerable wage increases and other benefits. The wages of the lowest-paid workers would rise by 35 per cent, and the average wages, by 15 per cent. But the workers knew only too well from their past experiences that any agreement with the government and the owners was just a piece of paper, and that the concessions would be whittled away in a very short time. The draft agreement was contemptuously rejected by the meetings of the workers of the major enterprises, and it was decided to continue the strike. Another miss!

True, the chaos in the camp of the Left seemed to be growing rather than diminishing. On May 27, the Gauchists organised a rally at the Charléty stadium attended by many thousands. The speakers attacked not so much de Gaulle as the Communist Party and the General Confederation of Labour, which were declared to be the principal antirevolutionary forces of order in French society, since the Communist Party did not support the adventurist and provocative appeals of the students' leaders to rise in arms. The party realised that a growing opposition to the regime did not yet mean that a revolutionary situation existed. The Gauchists hysterically called the workers to the barricades. But the Communist Party soberly took into account that in a situation where the army was not going to take the people's side, while the main petty-bourgeois mass of the French population was completely disinclined to undertake any major socialist transformations, an uprising would have been madness. The subsequent events fully confirmed the correctness of the Communists' line. But the Gauchist bawlers did not care a rap about the interests of the working class. Objectively speaking, they played a provocative role, which the Fifth Republic's regime was not slow in exploiting. To cap it all, the well-

known Leftist leader Mendès-France also spoke at the dissident rally at the Charléty stadium in support of the anti-Communist campaign waged by the false revolutionaries from Nanterre and the Sorbonne.

However consoling for de Gaulle that split among the Left might be, the events gave him no respite. On the following day, May 28, François Mitterrand, leader of the federation of the Left forces and his rival at the 1965 presidential elections, held a press conference at the Continental, where the General had once announced his withdrawal from political activity. He stated that, taking into account the apparent possibility of de Gaulle's departure as a result of the referendum, and in all probability even earlier, he suggested the setting up of a provisional government of ten members elected without discrimination and obsolete "dosage", the way it had been done in 1944 under different conditions, which were, however, comparable with the present disappearance of the state. It was thus suggested that the Communists should participate in the government. The cabinet would be headed by Mendès-France, while Mitterrand proposed his candidacy for the post of the president. Although he made his statement without prior consultation with the Communists, and Mendès-France had joined the anti-Communist campaign of the Gauchists, the Communists on the whole supported Mitterrand's initiative. But, unlike the Gauchists with their "revolutionary" illusions, they soberly assessed the situation and did not regard it as really revolutionary, although they believed de Gaulle's power to have been fatally undermined.

Now the crisis of the Gaullist power reached its highest point. The state seemed to disintegrate, and chaos now reigned in the administration itself. Although de Gaulle's response to the speeches of Mitterrand and Mendès-France was a sarcastic "political rejects", he could not but remember that at the 1965 elections Mitterrand had won ten and a half million votes. The ministers told each other in whispers that "the only solution [was] the General's departure", and that he was now in the same position as René Coty ten years before. De Gaulle himself, too, mentioned the subject of his departure in conversations with his ministers: "The French no longer want de Gaulle," he said with a sigh. The situation was expected to become clearer on the following day, May 29, at the sitting of the Council of Ministers appointed for 10 o'clock in the morning. But some 45 minutes before the scheduled meeting Pompidou was informed by someone from the Elysée, on the General's instructions, that the meeting was postponed until 15:30, May 30, and that now de Gaulle was going to Colombey. The puzzled Premier wanted to see General, but the latter himself called him confirming his departure. The time was too short to warn all the ministers, and many of them came to the meeting at the Elysée, only to learn there that

the President had unexpectedly left the capital and that he had taken along the suitcases containing his archives. The perplexity and confusion were general. The ministers remembered Louis XVI's flight to Varennes and Thiers' departure for Versailles on March 18, 1871. Despondency set in among the government majority in the Assembly. "Alas, we are sure, absolutely sure of his departure," said an old Gaullist, adding: "What a pity that the General did not retire in 1965. Today, the grateful nation would plead with him for the third time to return."

At 14:30 the Prime Minister received a group of deputies of the government majority. He repeated the General's words he had heard early in the morning on the telephone: "I am exhausted, I have not slept six nights. I must have 24 hours of calm and repose to make my decision. I am going to sleep at Colombey." The Prime Minister then said: "Now we must await the General's decision. But in the state of mind in which I have seen him these past days, his departure is not excluded." The events took their implacable course. At that very time a new demonstration of the working people began in Paris, called by the General Confederation of Labour. About a million of them marched, carrying slogans that called for a popular government of the democratic union in which the Communists would participate. Unlike the anarchist howls of the Gauchists, it was a realistic demand in view of the complete breakdown of the regime, put forward within the framework of Republican legality and unconnected with any designs for a violent revolution. Moreover, the mass organisations of the working people condemned the anarchist provocations of the Gauchists in the same way as they did the administration's actions motivated by fear: panic-stricken, the authorities were ready to start a civil war. The police forces of 65 departments (out of 90) were concentrated in the capital. Many army units, including tanks and paratroops, were held in readiness. Besides, Gaullist leaders hastily, feverishly prepared a demonstration, appointed for May 30 in support of de Gaulle.

At the height of all this fuss the stunning news came that de Gaulle had disappeared! The helicopter which he took to Colombey did not arrive there in time!

"The General has lost his head!" exclaimed one of the ministers. "We are falling into a historical drama." There was an all-out effort to find the lost President. Finally, at four in the afternoon on May 29 the Minister for War informed Pompidou that Air Defence had located the General: his helicopter had flown to West Germany! A call was made to General Massu at the headquarters of the French occupation forces in Baden-Baden. He reported that de Gaulle was with him and everything was O.K. They breathed a sigh of relief at the Hôtel Matignon. "I lived through two hours of terrible anguish,"

said Georges Pompidou. At six in the afternoon de Gaulle called him, this time from Colombey, and announced that on the following day, May 30, he would return to Paris and chair the meeting of the Council of Ministers as previously arranged.

What had happened? What were the reasons for the General's strange acts, for leaving the capital during the most critical days of the May events?

The *Connétable* had lost his head, of course; he was going through an acute moral crisis. The events had stunned and swamped him. Later, in December 1969, in a conversation with André Malraux, he would say: "In May 1968, everything slipped from my grasp. I could no longer rely on my own government." Indeed, he needed some sort of release, morally and physically. We may recall here the blow he sustained in 1940, when his expedition to Dakar failed. And in those days he was comparatively young. 28 years had left their mark on him, and he had aged. And old age, as he himself said, was like a shipwreck.

When he suddenly left Paris, he had no definite plan of action. There was a great deal of evidence of improvisation in this, the General's most unusual escapade. He did not fly to Baden-Baden alone but took the family with him, and his son Philippe de Gaulle was also summoned there. He also took along the most important of his papers and the things he valued most. On his return from across the Rhine, however, he rode from the airfield to Colombey in a police car that just happened to be there. That meant that he had indeed been planning an exit. In general, there was always something intrinsically ambiguous about his words and actions. He rejected in principle the need for following some prearranged obligatory course of action. Recall his military "doctrine of the circumstances", his profound respect for Bergson, his inclination to act on an impulse prompted by intuition and emotions, particularly under difficult and unexpected circumstances. Besides, he always believed it expedient to add an element of the mysterious and secretive to his actions. The General's behaviour in the present case was especially strongly affected by all these factors.

The countless attempts by French authors at analysis of the General's conduct, believed to be one of the most interesting riddles of France's history, produced a great many hypotheses about his intentions. It is said, for instance, that he wanted to produce a psychological shock even amongst his own supporters who began to waver, not to mention the whole of the bourgeoisie, which the General wanted to leave for a moment face to face with the void. The meeting with Massu is seen as motivated by the desire to check the army's reliability and to intimidate the population with the reputation of that general, with the well-remembered spectre of a civil war behind him. De Gaulle's sudden departure from Paris is

also said to be linked with the demonstration of the working people scheduled for May 29. It is hard to say whether de Gaulle was indeed afraid that the demonstrators inspired by the Gauchists would storm the Elysée. In any case, his sudden departure hinted at such a possibility. France's history knows several occasions when its rulers left the capital threatened with a revolution only to win it back by fighting from the outside. In short, the France of law and order had to be given a fright to make it rally round de Gaulle. That was, in the final analysis, the gist of the General's tactics.

At 14:30 on May 30, the General returned to the Elysée. He appeared before his ministers firm and resolute, looking definitely younger, as many said. "I have made up my mind. I stay," he stated at the meeting convened to discuss the plan for further action. It was decided to put off the referendum announced by de Gaulle on May 24, and to hold early parliamentary elections instead. A defeat at the referendum would enforce the General's departure, while a defeat at the election polls would not prevent him from fighting on, the more so that he now decided not to permit a defeat.

At 16:30 the French people heard de Gaulle speak on the radio. This time he did not appear on TV screens. His voice was much firmer than during the unfortunate speech of May 24. The General began fighting in earnest, fighting to win. He said: "Being the carrier of national and republican legality, I have reviewed, in the past 24 hours, all the eventualities without exception that would permit me to maintain it. I have made my decisions. In the present circumstances, I shall not retire. I have the people's mandate. I shall fulfil it... Today, I dissolve the National Assembly."

This was followed by an unequivocal declaration of war on the French Communist Party "which is a totalitarian enterprise". He threatened to resort to "other ways" than the elections. He insisted that "civic actions" should be organised, that is to say, detachments for fighting against the Left. He declared the prefects to be "commissars of the Republic" fully authorised to prevent "subversion". Subversion against whom and against what? De Gaulle thus described the enemy: "In fact, France is threatened by a dictatorship. There are some who want to force her to resign herself to a power that would be imposed amidst national despair, which power would evidently be that of a victor, that is to say, of totalitarian communism."

General de Gaulle thus regained his ability for vigorous action, but in the process he stooped to the most banal demagoguery. *L'Humanité*, the organ of the Communist Party, stated: "The head of state resorts to ruses and lying. He lies when he accuses the Communist Party of preparing subversion." Of course, the Fifth Republic was under threat. That really totalitarian system of personal power could be replaced by a restored and renovated democracy. But de

Gaulle shamelessly turned everything upside down. As usual, he saw nothing amoral about that. To his military way of thinking, false manoeuvres and confusing of the enemy were perfectly admissible in war, and he justified their use in politics as well.

An hour after the General's speech was broadcast on the radio, he stepped out onto the balcony of the Elysée. He silently listened to the noise of the mass demonstration organised by the Gaullists who carried the slogans: "Long live de Gaulle!", "France, to work!" The aide who stood next to him murmured: "My General, what a success for you..." De Gaulle replied: "If only it were the question of me alone..."

Indeed, one only had to look at the participants of the Gaullist demonstration to realise the social meaning of the event. Respectable middle-aged men predominated there. No workers. Former paratroopers, retired servicemen, and civil servants were most conspicuous. "A cortege of Pétain men," remarked an observer. Bourgeois France yearning for order and firm authority crowded onto the Champs-Élysées. De Gaulle's success this time was quite different from those moments in his life when he personified the national interest of France. Now he united the extreme reaction embodying, under the new conditions, the spirit of Vichy. He was no longer de Gaulle the man of June 18, 1940 — he was de Gaulle of the times of the R.P.F. farce. The alliance between de Gaulle and the extremists was quickly restored, followed as a matter of course by an amnesty for Salan and the other O.A.S. leaders. First Bidault, then Soustelle would return to France. As if sensing the personal defeat and the danger of losing the heroic halo of the national leader, the General tried to overcome his social conservatism, camouflaging his actions with a nobler aura of some progressive intentions.

On June 7, he gave a long TV interview to Michel Droit, editor of the conservative weekly *Figaro Littéraire*. The General offered a more comprehensive exposé of his views of the May events than on May 30. He said that "there had indeed been an explosion ... despite, or perhaps as a result of, the immense progress achieved in the ten years, as a result of peace which had been fully restored, and as a result of an incomparable international position" of France.

That was indeed a remarkable piece of absurd reasoning and glaring contradictions. An explosion as a result of achievements! Despite them, more likely. De Gaulle showed no intention at all to admit even a small share of responsibility for the explosion. He seemed to have forgotten that he had exercised undivided rule over France for ten years and that this had resulted in a situation, where as he himself admitted "one asked oneself at a certain moment if the country was not going to slide into nothingness without struggling."

It was true, though, that the man TV viewers saw on the screen of their sets on June 7, 1968, still looked much the same as the man of destiny they had become accustomed to see. There were the familiar style, rhetoric, and pathos. The well-known devices of the author of the book *The Edge of the Sword*: mysteriousness, political calculation and cunning made enigmatic and noble. But one thing was lacking, something that had made de Gaulle a historical figure: a clear and noble national goal. There was nothing but a desire to maintain his regime, and at any price at that.

For the first time the General revealed so clearly how remote he was from the people, who had rejected him in the turbulent days of May 1968.

Realising that the meaning of the events was fatal for him, de Gaulle made attempts to bridge the tragic gap between himself and France. He reminded the audience of his past deeds, many of which had been so radical and progressive. "Each time I acted in these different domains," he said, "I saw rising around me a tide of incomprehension, grievances, and sometimes of fury. That is destiny!"

The General was obviously trying to make his listeners accept that the May movement had been a phenomenon similar, let us say, to the rebellions of the extremists against his Algerian policy. But he was unable to point out the real cause of the present mass revolt against him. He passed in silence over his reactionary social policy and the liquidation of the most important elements of democracy in the administration of the country. Ignoring these aspects of his activity, which had aggravated the crisis of the entire system of French capitalism and had brought about "red May", he made a truly acrobatic mental somersault, declaring himself to be a revolutionary!

On what grounds, if one might ask? It transpired that he was going to carry out a "true revolution" by putting in effect the well-known "participation" plan. And at the same time he admitted that real power everywhere, from the state as a whole to any single enterprise, would remain in the hands of those who had it at the time. He repeated his favourite thesis: "Many men may hold conferences, but one man alone must act." True, this time he condemned not only communism but capitalism as well: "Property, management, the benefits of the enterprises belong only to capital under the capitalist system. So those who do not possess them find themselves in a state of isolation... No, capitalism does not offer a satisfactory solution from the viewpoint of man."

Of course, such an admission, coming from the old General, was no joking matter. It was a major ideological concession on de Gaulle's part. He spoke of the crisis of the "modern mechanical civilisation", of the alienation, suppression and enslavement of man

by capitalism. The events of May had obviously shaken him and made him see many things in a different light than before. It would appear that the six hours de Gaulle spent in the helicopter on May 29 had been quite fruitful: he said that flying and looking at the landscape of native France from above always set a clearer and less constrained perspective for his thinking about its existence.

Still, the General's conclusions, his vague and timid "participation" plan were quite inadequate either to the crisis of capitalism which he stated quite correctly, or the scope of the May events. The "participation" plan was not at all in the same class as some of de Gaulle's past plans and actions, so striking in their scope and courage. Let us recall, for instance, the detailed, profound, and deep plan for a "professional army"! And now he had nothing to offer except nebulous and ambiguous phrases totally lacking in breadth of vision and imagination. He was not unlike a doctor trying to treat an open fracture with sticking plaster. As always, the General demanded blind faith in him. But how could one believe his promise to permit the working people's participation in the profits and management of enterprises when he had spent ten years doing precisely the opposite—debaring the French people from any participation in the political administration of the country?

If the General cherished any hopes that someone would believe him, he was certainly woolgathering. Incidentally, he himself used, during the June 7 interview, symbols from a primitive painting of "a troop of condemned sinners led to the inferno and raising their fists against the angel". He called on the nation to tear themselves out of the hands of the demons and to embrace the angel—that is, de Gaulle himself!

In the interview, he again used the spectre of the "totalitarian dictatorship, to frighten his listeners. To avoid the dictatorship, he demanded that the parliamentary elections of June 23-30 should produce "good" results, that is, favourable to the ruling party. And he warned the voters: "And if, on the contrary, the results are poor, then everything is lost."

Thus de Gaulle fanned the hysterical fear that would become the motif of the 1968 election campaign. The Gaullists had never shown such fierce energy. They were no longer fighting for de Gaulle but for their own existence without him, although they still continued to use the magnetism of his name, such as it was now. The counterrevolutionary forces made thorough use of the May barricades with their black flags, which had excited the instinctive fear of the average Frenchman, who remained deep at heart a petty bourgeois. As for the Gauchists, who expressed in May 1968 the youth's spontaneous protest, they now became a direct instrument of intimidating the petty-bourgeois "stodgies" fearing the spectre of a civil war. Their new actions in June were often organised by

police provocateurs. For this reason, the elections produced a result completely unexpected by those who believed the events of May to be "revolutionary". There was a marked move to the Right, and the Left forces suffered serious setbacks. The Gaullists and their allies won more than a million additional votes and with them an unprecedented majority. They gained 97 seats and now had 358 seats out of 485 in the National Assembly.

The entire Left wing suffered substantial losses. The Federation of the Left lost 61 seats. The number of voters supporting the Communist Party dropped from 22.5 per cent to 20, and the number of seats in the Assembly, from 73 to 34. The *Monde* newspaper wrote that the Communist Party had to pay for the barricades which it had not built. Now, why were the elections so favourable for the regime after the workers' powerful action against it? Valdeque Rochet, General Secretary of the Communist Party of France, thus replied to that question: "The principal reason for the shift in the Gaullists' favour was the fear of civil war."

But de Gaulle's personal positions were in no way strengthened. One of his ministers said after the elections: "The game has been won, but the General is through." The social system was saved, but it only emphasised the fact that it was under de Gaulle that it had to be saved by desperate means. The state headed by de Gaulle revealed its fatal weakness—the inaction of all the traditional safety valves, such as the parties, parliament, the ministers, the government. Deprived of any independence, they bore no responsibility either.

It became clear that the brunt of all the political crises fell on the embodiment of the state system's real power, the President, rather than on any single part of the system. As "Red May" had shown, that called in question the very existence of the social structure. The bourgeoisie sensed the extreme danger of complete personalisation of power. During the June elections, the extraordinary circumstances compelled it to rally round de Gaulle for the last time. But after success had been achieved, broad sections of the bourgeoisie turned away from him. He no longer gave them a feeling of security but rather one of fear. The unique personal influence the General had on the masses, which had so effectively protected French capitalism behind the shield of higher national interest, was lost. De Gaulle's power had proved "depreciated". To add to all that, the General began condemning capitalism and, in proposing his "participation" plan, infringed on the sacred principle of private property. The bourgeoisie's long-pent dissatisfaction with the General's independence of action was now strong as never before. Having first lost the support of the people's masses, de Gaulle was now irrevocably losing the support of society's upper strata.

The eight months separating the June elections and the General's departure are called by his French biographers the period of "deferment". Indeed, it was deferment of the sentence passed in May 1968.

The depleted circle of loyal Gaullists expected the General to get his "second wind". There were some signs of it, too. In July, de Gaulle appointed Couve de Murville Prime Minister instead of Georges Pompidou who was, as the General put it, "transferred to the Republic's reserve". But would this be followed by any fresh developments in policy? When the first French H-bomb was exploded in August, people asked themselves whether de Gaulle's energy would also be released in a similar explosion. There were high expectations for the 17th press conference appointed for September 9. But the regular "High Mass" did not bring a sensation. Although the General said that Gaullism was "the modern form of the *élan* of this country once again revived to achieve ... brilliance, power and influence", he himself showed no *élan* at all; the General stated that "participation", apart from being applied at the enterprise level, must also be implemented at the level of the whole country through transforming the Senate into an economic and social organ representing "interest groups" ranging from the industrialists to the trade unions, and at the regional level, by creating parallel organs in the provinces. These vague plans did not inspire anyone. Even Louis Vallon, an ardent supporter of the "participation" plan, said that it was "a step backward compared with the declarations made previously". The press conference was a disappointment to all. "An admission of impotence", "the mole and the mountain"—these were the formulas used by the papers.

During the whole period of deferment de Gaulle seemed to be crippled by doubt and hesitation, although he continued to perform his routine duties as President just as punctiliously and indefatigably as ever. On two occasions, France again saw the General act resolutely and masterfully as in the past, ignoring all obstacles and unhesitatingly taking the most drastic measures.

In November, what was called the "currency putsch" of the bourgeoisie aimed against de Gaulle broke out. The industrialists had long resorted to every possible means to compensate for their losses over the wage increases that the working people had won in May. The most effective instrument had proved to be the depreciation of the franc, whose stability de Gaulle believed to be one of his primary achievements. To avoid their own losses, the owners kept selling their francs and buying West German marks. In the space of a few days, more than \$800 million were drained out of France. There was general talk of the inevitability of a devaluation of the heavy franc, that favourite child of the General, which had enabled him to shake the almighty dollar. But on November 24 de

Gaulle spoke on the radio, stating that the franc would not be devalued under any circumstances! The statement caused puzzlement and indignation at all the financial exchanges of the world. But de Gaulle had his way—with the aid of Bonn! He did not demand sacrifices from the industrialists, of course—only from the working people. Thus de Gaulle's ten years in power led to a financial breakdown, just as the old "regime of the parties" had. De Gaulle's prestige sustained yet another heavy blow.

On December 25, Israeli planes raided the airport in Beirut destroying the civil aviation planes there. Without consulting anyone, General de Gaulle ordered a strict embargo on supplying the Mirage fighters to Israel, which had already paid for them. The discontent among the pro-Israeli circles, whose omnipresent influence affected even many of the Gaullist government members, rose to a boiling point. They had been indignant at de Gaulle's independent line in the Middle Eastern affairs for quite a while, and now international Zionism declared war to the knife on de Gaulle.

De Gaulle's departure was referred to as something quite inevitable. 1968 ended in a gloomy atmosphere. In his New Year speech de Gaulle appealed in vain to the people to "bury the devils that have tormented us in the past year". Commenting on de Gaulle's speech, *Le Monde* pointed out that all the burning issues remained, and that the triumph of the June elections had not, in fact, torn out the roots of the May crisis. Various political circles merely discussed who would replace de Gaulle and how. However, on January 18, 1969 Georges Pompidou openly said at a press conference in Rome that in the event of the General's departure he would be candidate for the presidency. Three days later, de Gaulle stated that he was going to continue as President until the end of his term, that is, until the 1972 elections. But was he really so firm in that decision? All the signs pointed to the absence of such resolution. To regain it, de Gaulle decided to conduct a new referendum on the issue of "participation" or, to be more precise, on the reorganisation of the Senate and the new regional structure. He wanted a confirmation of the country's support for him; if he got it, he would remain in his post and continue to implement his "participation" plan seriously; if not, he would leave. On February 2, de Gaulle announced a referendum for April 1969. Some members of de Gaulle's "inner circle" believed the referendum to be unnecessary, convinced that the reform might be easier implemented through parliament. De Gaulle agreed with that but refused even to consider giving up the referendum. He said that if he was destined to depart, he would do so as a social reformer, as a man who stood for renovation, and not as defender of the frightened bourgeoisie's obsolete privileges. Two years before, he had said: "I must

retire with dignity. I must remain an irreproachable example. That is necessary for history... The French have only to say the word. I shall not try to hang on for a day even. I shall choose my own way of going, but I shall go."

De Gaulle could have remained in power for three more years before his mandate ran out. But after May 1968, which had undermined the foundations of his influence, power, and prestige, that would have been mere decline, vegetation, and fall. He would have to make concessions, to manoeuvre, and submit to force. His reign would have ended amid growing hostility and disdain. He was especially afraid of the effects of old age creeping upon him implacably. It was physical and mental dilapidation, he always said, that had been responsible for Pétain's pitiable destiny. He would thus have either to make humiliating concessions to the opposition on all sides, with its contradictory demands, or to go. But de Gaulle chose a third way. He decided to try once again to consolidate his positions by getting France's support through a referendum, and to act with his customary independence and inflexibility in case of success. He launched an offensive without any confidence in its success. The numerous polls and other sure signs pointed to defeat. The U.D.R., his own party, began the campaign leading up to the new referendum slackly and unwillingly. The Gaullists saw no sense in this unnecessary trial of strength, which could merely compromise the success of June 1968. The General, to whose name they owed everything, was now a burden to them.

But even in the expectation of an inevitable defeat he led the campaign as if he was confident of victory. He made two TV appearances, vigorously appealing to the people to answer "yes" and warning of his departure in case the majority answered "no". But at that very time his personal archives were taken from the Palace de l'Elysée to the Rue Solférino. Three days before the voting he wrote two documents in his own hand and handed them to the chief of his personal staff Bernard Tricot, who had to keep them until further notice. On April 25, de Gaulle went to Colombey. On April 27 he voted at the village hall and awaited the results of the referendum. In the evening, the telephone calls from Paris began coming in. Everything pointed to a defeat, and when that was absolutely clear, General de Gaulle ordered Bernard Tricot, by telephone at 22:00, to pass on the previously prepared documents to the Prime Minister. In his letter to Couve de Murville de Gaulle thanked him and all the ministers for their cooperation and bade them farewell. The text of the second document was broadcast on the radio at some time past midnight: "I cease to exercise my functions as President of the Republic. This decision takes effect at noon today."

With these two lines, de Gaulle ended his political career—without speeches, farewell ceremonies, without even a return to

Paris. He said to one of his intimates: "You must agree that this is a fine way out. A fine way out in the face of history, for I have drawn attention to 'participation', which is the main thing for the future of France. That is the last service I have been able to do France."

In the days that followed, only a few of the former subordinates of the ex-President were allowed to come to the Boisserie, where the General retired. When one of them, Jacques Foccart, spoke to him of some political news, de Gaulle interrupted him: "No, that does not concern me. You should not talk of this to me..." He would only discuss some purely technical questions, like arranging the careers of his former subordinates or the organisation of the Paris bureau. He settled several financial problems. In 1946 de Gaulle refused a general's pension, and now he would not receive the rather considerable pay as former President and the salary of a member of the Constitutional Council. The General's coworkers naturally avoided asking him any tactless questions about his feelings and mood, while he himself was impenetrably cool and quiet. Everybody instinctively felt the significance of what had happened. One of those who was received at Colombey in the first days, spoke to his friends of the impression de Gaulle had produced on him: "It is as sad as serene, and as grand as you can imagine. But I did not see a man preparing for his death..."

The General had plans for the future, and he decided at once to start working on his memoirs. On May 4 he asked for some documents he needed for the first chapter, dealing with his return to power in 1958. "I shall now write, and this may prove a great service to France."

But was he really so calm deep at heart as he wanted everyone to believe? De Gaulle was living through a period of a torment, although he had foreseen the course of the events. He was most of all worried about the manner of his departure — had it been grand enough? What would history say? In 1946, he had left of his own free will. He had not been formally rejected by any vote or anything of that kind. Things were quite different now. He had not been ousted out by the despised parties, as had then been the case; he was voted out by France, by 12 million French people: more than a half of the voters answered "no"! He was stung by the ingratitude of his subjects, by the fact that the country had immediately gone into strenuous fighting around electing a new president, forgetting him. On May 10 an announcement was made that the General with his wife and an aide had suddenly left for Ireland in a military plane. There he settled at a second-rate hotel in a secluded spot, giving up all links with the outer world. His aide told the journalists that the General would stay in Ireland until the presidential elections in France were over. Leaning on a stick,

wearing a dark coat, and with a noticeable stoop, the General sometimes went on walks along the sandy beach. "An old king in exile..." The mocking criticism young Captain de Gaulle had earned almost half a century before proved prophetic. The ceremony on the occasion of the anniversary of June 18, 1940 was held without the "man of June 18". The same would happen in the following year, 1970, when he would go on his last trip abroad, this time a private one, to Spain. And in June 1971 he was going to visit China.

De Gaulle lived in complete solitude in Colombey. He was fully immersed in the past, writing *Memoirs of Hope* and reliving, as it were, his life since 1958. He planned to write three volumes: *The Renovation*, *The Effort*, *The Ending*. He completed the first volume, which appeared in October 1970, and wrote two chapters of the second. *Memoirs of Hope* reminded one of *War Memoirs* in their character and style. The General retained complete clarity of thought and his literary talent. But the new, unfinished memoirs lacked the romantic dramatic quality of *War Memoirs* relating to the heroic period in de Gaulle's life. Only the chapters on foreign policy were still full of his faith in the future greatness of France. De Gaulle naturally tried to justify all the moves in his domestic policy described above. The memorialist's special brand of sincerity was curiously blended with extreme bias. That is a human rather than a historical document.

Only rare visitors disturbed the General's quiet. On December 11, 1969, it was André Malraux. He saw de Gaulle rested from the strain of the last weeks of being in power, but in a sad and melancholy frame of mind. Looking at him, Malraux thought: "How aptly he embodies the past of France! An image without age, just as the snow-covered forest behind him with which he has become united." The dialogue between those two intellectuals and politicians, closely associated since 1944, lasted for four hours. They did not need too many words to understand one another: mere hints sufficed. The General sometimes made striking admissions. Here are fragments from what the General said in the dusk of that day in December: "When I left, age probably played a role. That is possible. But, you understand, I had a contract with France. Things might go well or badly, but she was with me... The contract was broken. But it was not that that was painful... The French no longer have any national ambition. They no longer want to do anything for France... What is happening now does not concern me. That is not what I wanted. That is quite different... Greatness—it is finished."

What was it? The bitterness of a retired and forgotten man? Regret about the past? Dissatisfaction with what he had done, and the realisation of helplessness? De Gaulle and Malraux spoke almost entirely about the past, and of the meaning of life and death. De Gaulle dropped this remark: "In the end, only death wins."

On Monday, November 9, 1970, Charles de Gaulle rose early, as usual. An hour later, wearing a black suit and dark tie, he ascended a wooden staircase and passed into his study. From the windows of his tower he saw fine drizzle fall. Today, he decided to tackle his correspondence. He said nearly nothing at breakfast; Mme de Gaulle was also taciturn, as usual. It was fresh and damp in the house. The General returned to his study. At half past two René Piot came, the farmer who rented the General's land. De Gaulle invited him to take a seat in the easy chair to the left of the table and offered him a cigarette. He called in the neighbour to discuss the renewal of the lease. The General said that he no longer wanted to rent the land but suggested that Piot should go on tilling it and taking in the crops. He would have to pay no rental, only keep the field neat. "Yes, my General. And thank you," said Piot. "You've made me a present, in fact." De Gaulle also asked him to fix the fence: he had noticed that it had fallen down in places. He asked Piot about the progress of the cow-shed he was building. He then saw the guest to the outer door, a courtesy he accorded to everyone—ministers, deputies, generals. Lifting his head to the grey sky, de Gaulle said: "This year, autumn has come all at once." "And soon winter will come," added Piot.

De Gaulle sat down to work on his memoirs. He began describing the alarming events of 1963. The General then left the house to take a walk in the park, the paths of which were covered with fallen leaves. At five o'clock he went to the library for tea, as had been the custom in that house for thirty years. He telephoned Paris requesting one letter to be typed and certain materials brought. The conversation was quickly over, for the General did not like the telephone. There was a phone in the hall under the staircase, but none in the study. Then de Gaulle again worked until half past six, at which time he put out the light and went to the library, where the maid Charlotte was laying the table for supper. A TV set was on in the corner. The General was an assiduous TV viewer; he was now awaiting the local newscast which would begin at seven o'clock. He sat down at the card table and started playing patience, to kill the time. Suddenly the cards fell from his hands, he half-rose and, clutching his breast, cried out hoarsely: "Oh, the pain... I have pain there in the back." The pain struck like lightning, he lost consciousness and fell sideways. His knees bent, the hand weakly caught at the armchair, the spectacles fell to the floor. Mme de Gaulle cried for help, then called out to the maid: "Call the doctor!" Charlotte ran to the telephone. The time was 19:03.

The General had told the wife what to do in case—She remembered what he had done himself at the time of Anne's death. "We need a mattress," she cried, and Charlotte quickly brought a

mattress from the bed of one of the General's grandchildren. With difficulty, they rolled de Gaulle onto it.

19:08. The General's chauffeur Maroux undid his tie and collar. Mme de Gaulle sent him to fetch a clergyman, and he ran towards the automobile. 19:22. The young doctor Guy Lacheny and l'abbé Jagey came simultaneously. The abbot was asked to wait, and the doctor rushed towards the sick man. The symptoms were clear: rupture of the aorta, death comes in such cases in less than 30 minutes. Still, the doctor made an injection of morphia, but the General felt nothing. Now the clergyman was asked in, and he knelt on the other side of the body, hurriedly fumbling for his missal and consecrated oil. His voice trembling with emotion, he said the words of Extreme Unction: "My son Charles, by this chrism, let the Saviour pardon all the sins that you have committed. Amen."

De Gaulle's life was contradictory and extraordinary, and so was his death. It does not often happen that the demise of a state leader retired over an obvious political defeat causes a world-wide response. But that was precisely what happened when Charles de Gaulle met his end, 13 days short of his 80th birthday. "More soldiers, more music", is said to have been Churchill's wish for his burial. General de Gaulle's last will and testament was to be buried in the small cemetery at Colombey without any public ceremony whatever. No highly placed officials, the President, the Prime Minister, ministers or deputies were to be present.

On November 12, 1970, the General was buried at the Colombey cemetery, in accordance with his will. Only close relatives attended the funeral. The coffin covered by the national flag was brought from the Boisserie to the church by an armoured personnel carrier. It was then carried by ten youths between 18 and 20 years of age, all of them residents of Colombey chosen by the Mayor. Saint-Cyr cadets formed the guard of honour.

But the modest obsequies in a small township attracted unusual attention and excited great emotion. The funeral toll at Colombey was answered by 50,000 church bells throughout the cities and villages of France. The national mourning was sincere and general. Georges Pompidou, President of the Republic, said in his speech on the radio: "France is a widow." "His demise can leave no Frenchman indifferent," said the statement by the French Communist Party.

On the same day a Requiem Mass was said in Paris at Notre-Dame in the presence of representatives of 84 states. Crowds stood in the streets and carried flowers to the Place de l'Etoile, to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe erected in honour of Napoleon's victories. The famous square, the symbol

of France's glory, was renamed Place de Charles de Gaulle. A special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was held in New York in commemoration of de Gaulle.

All countries paid homage to the memory of the General. In Moscow, the leaders of the Communist Party and of the Soviet state, as well as numerous representatives of the public, visited the French embassy. In a telegram to the President of the French Republic the Soviet leaders wrote:

"The name of General de Gaulle, one of the leaders of the anti-Hitlerite coalition, is inalienably linked for all the Soviet people with the joint struggle of the Soviet Union and France in the hard years of the Second World War and with the victory over Fascist tyranny. An outstanding state leader who enjoyed high authority on the international scene, General de Gaulle did a great deal to restore the greatness of France on the path of independent orientation in foreign policy.

"The people of the Soviet Union remember well, and value highly, the great contribution General de Gaulle made to the development of the relations of friendship and cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and France. Our negotiations with General de Gaulle during his visit to the Soviet Union in 1966 opened up a new stage in the history of Soviet-French relations; they played an important role in the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and France on the basis of relaxation of the international tension, ensuring European and international security, and development of cooperation between all countries."

Charles de Gaulle's prestige in the world was very high. Many saw his personality as an embodiment of political realism and of an ability to overcome the class bias and anti-Communist prejudice in the name of France's higher interest. In the Soviet Union, he was respected and valued as an active supporter of the traditional friendship between our two countries. For the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, de Gaulle was above all the man who put an end to the war in Algeria, and who condemned US aggression in Vietnam and of Israel in the Middle East. De Gaulle's firm adherence to the principle of national independence found a particularly lively response in the developing countries. In the eyes of Western Europe, he embodied the resistance to American hegemony, and the organisation of independent European cooperation. Although France alone withdrew from the N.A.T.O. military system, this act also affected the position of the other West European countries. Washington now had to be more circumspect in matters concerning their independence. Finally, for his own compatriots de Gaulle was above all a personification of France's independence and greatness at a stage in its history when it seemed to have irrevocably become a second-rate power.

All these circumstances made de Gaulle a figure of great authority and popularity. At many stages in his life he was, in the eyes of the world, an embodiment of France—a great country that has so generously enriched the world civilisation. The personal qualities of this extraordinary man, his character, courage, firmness, high culture excited great admiration, as did his true spirit of independence, love for everything that is great and noble, and faith in himself and his cause.

On the other hand, Charles de Gaulle was by no means a paragon of all the human virtues. He often acted as a conservative politician; objectively, despite his subjective intentions, he served the world of capitalism. Cynical and haughty, he despised men; confident of his infallibility, he made grave mistakes. That is an indubitable fact proved on many occasions. But de Gaulle himself said: "One should accept me as I am or not accept me at all."

The present book has been written precisely from this standpoint. There are, of course, many moot points about de Gaulle's long and complicated life, and his qualities as man and politician. He himself took great care to make his words and deeds highly mysterious. The idea of the well-known French historian Tocqueville that "the destiny of individual men is even more obscure than the destiny of the peoples" seems to be highly appropriate in his case.

Besides, there is the "Gaullist myth", as it is called. Its sources were de Gaulle's own original conception of his role, the apologia written by such ardent admirers as François Mauriac, and primarily political exigency. The main feature of the "Gaullist myth" is the substitution of false political and social ideas, of mystical and irrational concepts for the real phenomena.

The author of the present book naturally does not claim his evaluations of the various episodes of Charles de Gaulle's many-faceted and contradictory life to be definitive. This is, after all, only the first book about de Gaulle in Russian. It was written directly in the wake of the events that made up the General's career, separated from the present by too short a historical distance.

More categorical judgments would, of course, have been more spectacular. A great many such judgments have been expressed in France. For instance, *Paris-Match* wrote that in view of most Frenchmen de Gaulle's place in history is comparable to that of Napoleon, and higher than that of Clemenceau.

The extreme relativity of such historical parallels has long become proverbial. There can be no doubt, however, that General de Gaulle is rightly accorded pride of place among the many statesmen in France's history.

